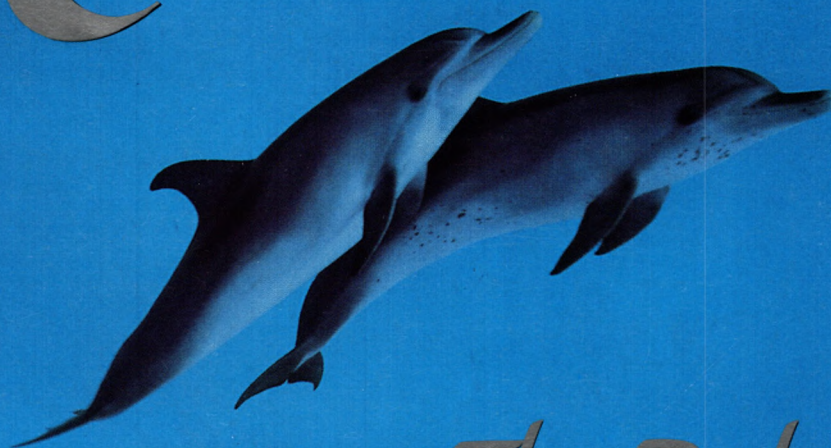


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Skin Diver

MAY 1999



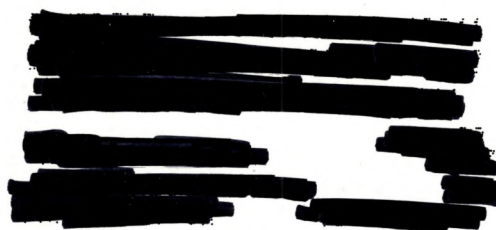
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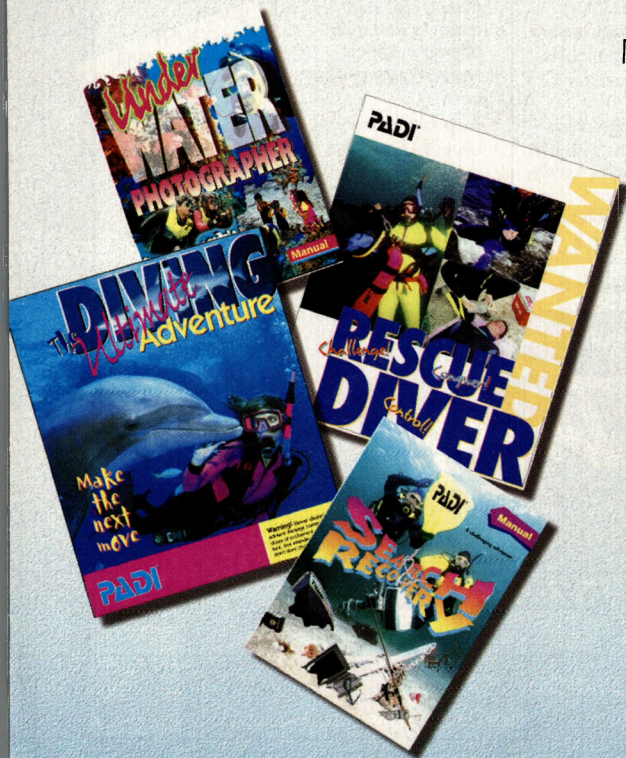


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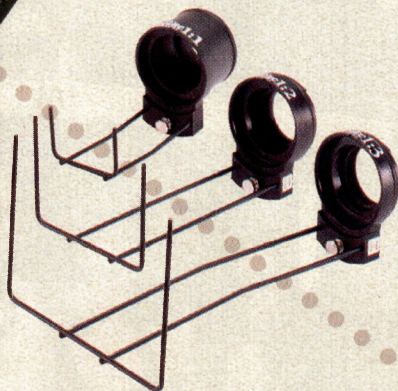
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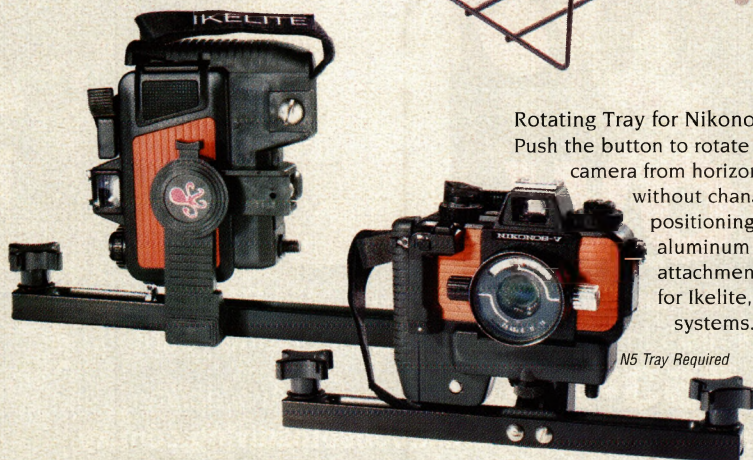
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CONTENTS



photo/Bill Harrigan

FEATURES

photo/Walt Stearns



88

ABOUT THE COVER:
Cedric Atlas arcs through
the cool blue waters of
The Bahamas in a playful
game of follow the leader
with two spotted dolphins.
Photo/Donald Tipton.

- 54 CITIZEN ECO-DRIVE AQUALAND DIVE WATCH** by Ty Sawyer
Solar powered for today's eco-minded diver.
- 57 MUCK BEAUTIES OF LEMBEH STRAIT** by Brandon D. Cole
No wall, no coral, no reef, no viz. No sharks, schooling fish or beautiful invertebrates. And absolutely one of the most exciting dives of my life...
- 61 BIGGER AND BADDER IN BAJA** by James Forte
The complete diver's guide to the realm of Señor Big.
- 68 DAY TRIPPING THE BAY ISLANDS** by Rick Frehsee
We follow in the wake of creatures large and small...
- 76 A FRIEND'S FIRST DIVE IN COSTA RICA** by James Forte
Costa Rica is the kind of place where everyone can have a good time, even those who don't dive...
- 79 THE BAHAMAS** by Bill Harrigan
Inside out from Walker's Cay to San Sal.
- 88 FAMILY DIVE VACATIONS** by Carolyn Pascal-Guarino
Packing and readiness tips from a super mom.
- 94 RIDING A BLUE TRAIN** by Walt Stearns
Swept along the reef by Cozumel's high voltage currents...

DEPARTMENTS

- 10 **EDITORIAL** by Al Hornsby
It's About That Time
- 12 **FREEFLOW/HAPPENINGS** by Scott Jones
Diving's Latest News
- 16 **ENCOUNTERS** by Al Hornsby
The Yellowhead Jawfish
- 18 **SCUBAMED** by Fred Bove, M.D., Ph.D.
Questions About Injuries
- 20 **WATERWORK** by Jed Livingston
7 Steps to an Easy Boat Dive
- 24 **TOTALLYTEK** by Karl Shreeves
This is Your Brain in a Bucket. Any Questions?

GEARING UP

- 27 **GEAR TO GRAB** by Ty Sawyer
- 28 **HOW TO BUY A BC** by Ken Kurtis
- 36 **BIG SHOT** by Al Hornsby
Shark Shooter
- 38 **CROSSTALK** by E.R. Cross
Deco Table Questions and Cetacea Quandary
- 40 **GOIN' PRO** by Bill Harrigan
Where You Go Once You've Gone Pro
- 42 **ENVIRONMENT** by Jean-Michel Cousteau
Sharks—The Jaws of Life
- 47 **SPECIALTIES** by Ty Sawyer
Know Thy Gear
- 51 **DIVER'S LIBRARY** by Heather Brown
- 129 **TIME CAPSULES** by Tamara Collins
Skin Diver's Nuggets of Yesteryear
- 130 **I LEARNED** by Steven W. Singer
Kayak Dive from Hell

DIRECTORIES

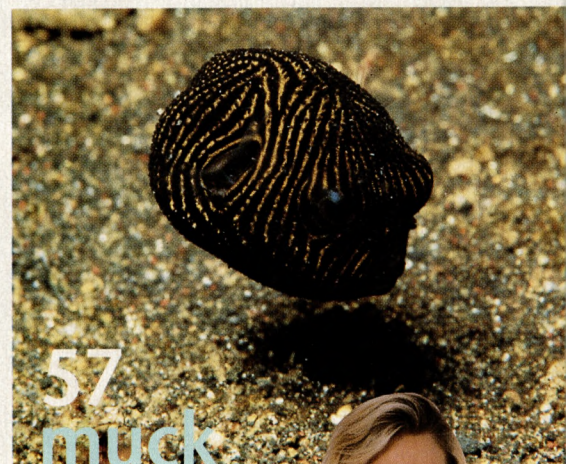
- 100 *Internet Directory*
- 104 *U.S. Dive Store Directory*
- 114 *Advertiser Directory/Reader Service Information*
- 116 *Overseas Divers' Directory*

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61
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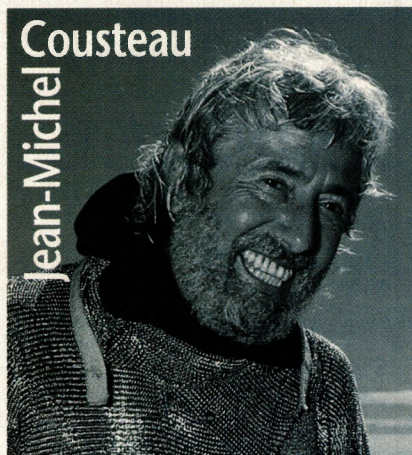
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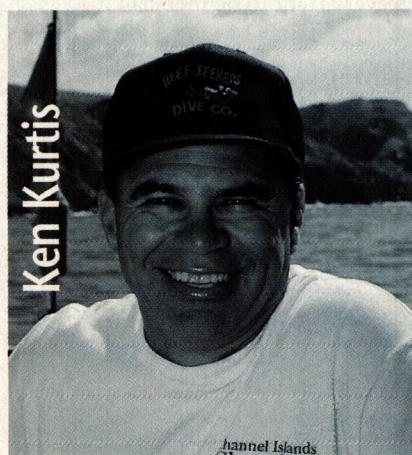
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JEAN-MICHEL COUSTEAU, the eldest son of the late Jacques Cousteau, explored the world's oceans with his family aboard the research vessels *Calypso* and *Alcyon*. He is now a spokesman for the environment, reaching out to the public as an author, lecturer and television/multi-media producer. In 1997, Jean-Michel launched the Jean-Michel Cousteau Institute, a non-profit institute dedicated to uniting the world in a global effort to halt marine devastation. In this issue, Jean-Michel writes about *Sharks—The Jaws of Life* in his monthly Environment column.



Jean-Michel Cousteau

KEN KURTIS, author of the new *Skin Diver* series, *How to Buy a...*, has been a NAUI Instructor since 1980 and the co-owner of Reef Seekers Dive Co. in Beverly Hills, California, since 1988. Ken serves as a Dive Team Leader at the Long Beach Aquarium of the Pacific, and is chairman of Chamber Day, an annual benefit for the Catalina Hyperbaric Chamber. When he's not diving, Ken maintains his career as an actor. A few years back, Ken got to go on a dive to 3,500 feet in the Alvin submersible to observe earthquake faults for the PBS documentary, *Alvin & the Earthquakes*, which he hosted and produced.



Ken Kurtis

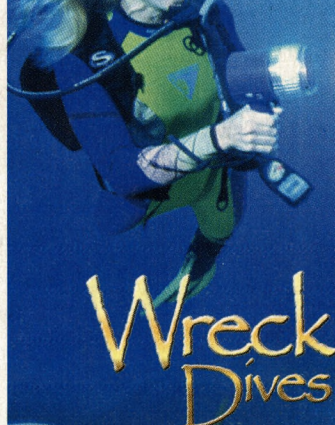
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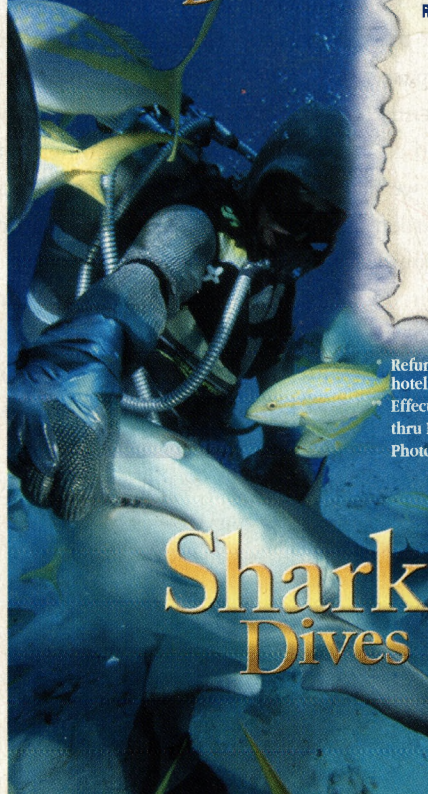
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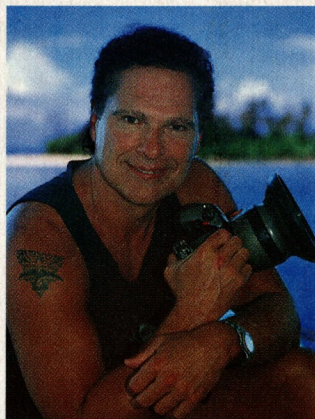
*Refunds are for dive trips only, and do not include airfare, hotel, meals, or other expenses.

Effective: December 15th, 1998

thru December 15th, 1999

Photography by Walt Stearns





For most of us in North America, winter is over, and summer is just around the corner. For divers, it's more that the cold water and winds are about over, and those hot, still days when the diving is best are coming up. While some of us are way ahead and have been in the water since the ice first melted (or before), most of us just haven't been that motivated, yet.

When was the last time you looked at your dive gear? When was the last time you said, "I'm going diving...wanna go?" Hopefully, you got a great trip in somewhere during the cold season, to someplace warm and balmy (or at least to a place where the water wasn't solid). If you didn't, however, the chances are that inertia, unnoticed, may have set in and is taking its toll. In physics (or at least in the science fiction books where I do most of my reading about physics these days), there is the concept that the universe and everything in it is constantly striving toward entropy, the state of final dissolution. I think that motivation—even the motivation to do something as marvelous as diving—conforms to that principle, as well.

After all, it is far simpler to not go out to the garage and dust off the dive bag, to not take our gear down to the dive store for its annual check-up, to not pick up the phone and call a dive buddy and plan to go diving. And, if we're still lugging around waist number two from all that stuff we ate during the holidays, it's

It's About That Time

certainly less trouble to not go work on our own fitness, either.

Yet, with a moment's thought, it is so easy to remember that last great dive, when the busy, demanding world floated away on a stream of sparkling bubbles, and the peacefulness of Mother Nature's most amazing creation, the underwater realm, gently took our spirits and infused them with a sense of what can only be described as "aahh...". And then, that moment of magic when some remarkable creature we had never seen before swam up, peered into our masks, unafraid, and regarded us, curiously, as another resident of its liquid domain, making us feel welcome, accepted and somehow, like we also had every right to be there; all this occurring in the instant its bright eyes met ours.

For me, that's about all it takes to remember why diving has always seemed the most incredible thing I've ever experienced, and why every time I slip beneath the surface I immediately ask myself (again): "Why aren't you finding a way to do this every day?"

So, if you will excuse me, I've got some stuff to do out in the garage. 🐼

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Skin Diver

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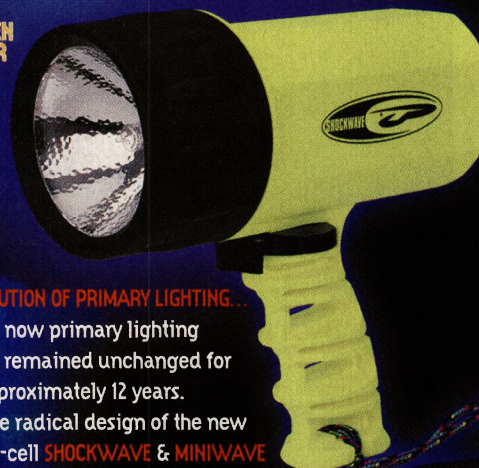
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photo/Al Hornsby

Project Seahorse

Been lucky enough to see a seahorse lately?

International Program Protects Elusive Creature

Divers and photographers fortunate enough to see a seahorse during a dive know the feeling of discovery and wonder that comes with interacting with these graceful, yet hard to find sea creatures. A recent international initiative, Project Seahorse, was introduced to help protect the world's seahorse population.

Researchers have reported that more than 20 million seahorses are taken from their habitats around the world each year. These animals are typically used for medicinal purposes and in the pet and souvenir trades. McGill recently gathered aquarium professionals and researchers from 13 countries at the Shedd Aquarium in Chicago to discuss the problem.

Debra Kerr Fassnacht, senior vice president at Shedd Aquarium, says Project Seahorse is being widely embraced. The aquarium recently opened a new exhibit titled, "Seahorse Symphony."

Internationally, Project Seahorse will involve the implementation of community-based initiatives in the Philippines and Vietnam. In the

Philippines, the group has helped set up marine preserves that allow local seahorse populations to grow, while in Vietnam, its Institute of Oceanography will help develop small-scale seahorse farms. The goal is to help seahorse fishers become seahorse farmers, reducing the need for wild seahorse fishing. 🐠

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SPRING DUNK FOR JUNK

Mar-Vel Dive Club will present its first Spring dunk for Junk May 8 in Greenwich Lake, Gloucester County, New Jersey.

For information, call (609) 962-8719; e-mail mtldetman@hotmail.com. 🐠

U/W TREASURE EGG HUNT

The Anderson Divers Association will lead its fourth annual Underwater Treasure Egg Hunt May 15 at South Cove County

Park, Lake Keowee, South Carolina. In addition to the treasure hunt, there will be putt-putt golf, horseshoes, and volleyball.

All proceeds for this charity will go to the Multiple Sclerosis Society. Supporters and sponsors will receive special recognition.

For information, call Ben Cothran at (864) 231-8512 or Bill Routh at (864) 638-3696. 🐠

SEASPACE '99

Seaspace '99 will be held May 14 to 16 at the Hyatt Regency

Hotel, Houston, Texas. It will feature seminars, workshops, a party with prize giveaways, more than 150 exhibitors, and U/W film presentations. Workshops will include a presentation on Technical Diving by Jim Bowden, holder of the world's record deepest scuba dive (925 feet), and a presentation on the Elements of U/W Photography by Ernest Brooks III. The Film Festival will highlight the works of cinematographer John McKenney and others.

For information, call (713)

Going Deep!

To diving enthusiasts and those involved in the marine environment, Dr. Sylvia Earle needs no introduction. Appropriately known as the "Ocean's Most Prolific Ambassador," Earle's continuing efforts to help us all "Sea Change" have been well-documented. But her latest project goes deeper—much deeper!

Starting this spring, as part of her role as leader of the National Geographic Society's Sustainable Seas Expedition (SSE) program, Dr. Earle will pilot a specially-designed one-person submarine (the NEWTSUB Deepworker 2000) into

Sylvia Earle, one of the ocean's greatest ambassadors.



photo/Kip Evans

each of the National Marine Sanctuaries scattered around the country. School children and adults will be able to follow these missions on the Internet and interact with her.

SSE's main purpose is to document systematically for the first time the different types of life forms that live in the 12 marine sanctuaries. This will provide a baseline to determine which of the differ-

ent life forms are in danger and whether their populations are growing or declining.

For more information on the Sustainable Seas Expeditions, visit the website at www.nationalgeographic.com/seas. 🐟

Sink Your Teeth Into This!

This fall, you have the chance to meet some sharks up close and personal. Certified divers (age 18 or older) can join staff from Boston's New England Aquarium on a unique educational adventure in The Bahamas. This expedition, which runs October 8 through 17, combines shark research and fish collecting in the northernmost tip of The Bahamas.

The first four days are spent with Dr. Erich Ritter, principal shark researcher at Walker's Cay, and Wes Pratt, NOAA scientist. During this part of the trip you can participate in shark tagging and tracking. Participants then climb aboard

the RV *Coral Reef II* live-aboard for five days of exciting shark encounters. There you'll be able to assist aquarium personnel preparing an actual shark feed. It's the perfect opportunity to learn what it's like to work at an aquarium while at the same time logging some once-in-a-lifetime dives.

For more information, contact Holly Martel Bourbon at (617) 973-5248. 🐟



photo/Al Hornsby

Awaiting your arrival in The Bahamas—the blacktip reef shark.

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467-6675 or visit the website at www.seaspaces.ycg.org. 🐟

DUI OWNER'S GROUP DIVE TRIPS

The DUI Owner's Group and Optiquatics have teamed up and scheduled four dive trips for 1999: June 9 to 12; September 25 to 28; and December 8 to 11. Each multi-day trip will visit California's Channel Islands on the dive boat *Peace* out of Ventura Harbor. Each trip will feature slide shows, clinics, workshops, and use of DUI drysuits, BCs and other equipment. Sea & Sea photo-

graphic equipment will also be available.

For information, visit Optiquatics website at www.optiquatics.com, call Joe Wysocki at (310) 457-3403; e-mail Optiquatic@aol.com. 🐟

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Co-sponsored by TMVC of Australia and UAB School of Medicine, this fully accredited CME course provides continuing education credits for physicians, pharmacists, nurses, and veterinary healthcare professionals. The course will take place July 31 to August 14 in

Cairns, Australia. Participants will spend eight days in the Great Barrier Reef area and in Tropical Queensland.

For information, call (800) 633-4734, e-mail nature@ietravel.com, or visit the website at www.ietravel.com or www.cme.erap.uab.edu. 🐟

LIGHT & MOTION ABOARD NAIA IN TONGA

Light & Motion is sponsoring a trip aboard the live-aboard *Naia* August 3 to 9 in Tonga. Light & Motion CEO Mike Topolovac will lead guests through informal evening seminars. He will also

lead video shooting trips of Tonga's famous humpback whales. Free use of Light & Motion video housings and accessories will be included in the trip.

Price is \$2,900, which includes accommodations, meals, diving, tax, and transfers. Airfare is additional.

For information, contact Light & Motion, Inc., at (831) 645-1525. 🐟

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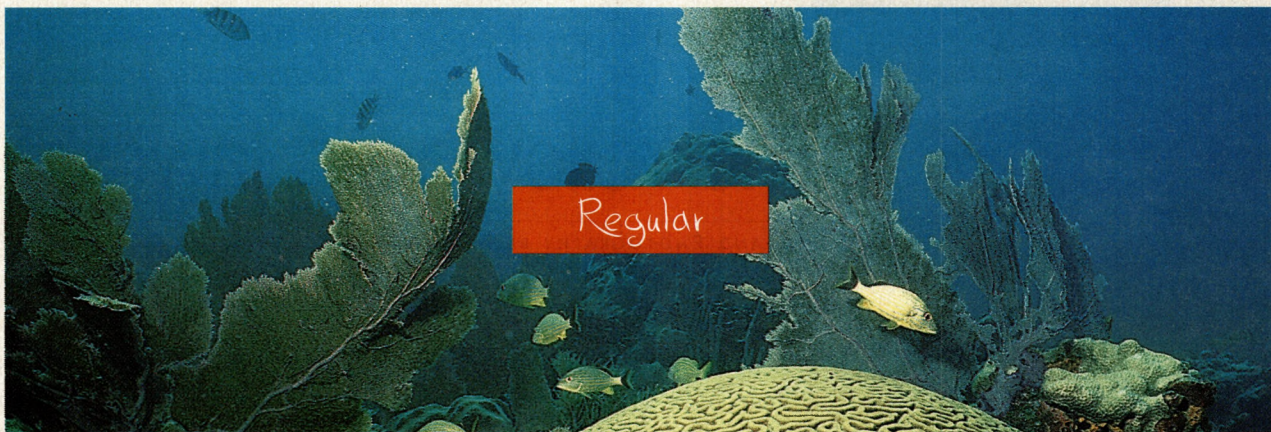
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The Yellowhead Jawfish

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY AL HORNSBY

In the Caribbean, after the grandeur of a dramatic wall dive, there's that shallow water part of your multi-level profile, or your safety stop. To some, this may seem like a necessary—but boring—part of the dive, but guess what? It doesn't have to be.

On many Caribbean reefs, the top of the wall is at the edge of a sand flat. **Bloody Bay Wall** in Little Cayman is a perfect example. Along the demarcation between the wall's living coral and the sand, there is usually a band of crushed coral. If you find yourself in an area like this, at depths between 10 and just more than 100 feet, with a little bit of looking you're likely to find a very interesting fish—the yellowhead jawfish (*Opistognathus aurifrons*). Typically living in colonies,

these industrious little fish, only about four inches long, will be seen hovering upright, just above or partially out of a burrow.

The lip of the burrow will be surrounded by a small crater, and if you could look deep inside, you'd see it has been carefully constructed and immaculately maintained. Extending for 12 to 14 inches downward, it will have an enlarged chamber at the end. Not only carefully dug, it will also have bits of coral and rock meticulously wedged into the walls, keeping sand from seeping in.

If you lie down on the bottom

(carefully) and slowly inch toward the little jawfish, it will gradually become accustomed to you and allow you to observe. If you are quiet and still, you may see feeding behavior, as the fish hovers above the burrow picking small zooplankton out of the current. If another fish approaches, you may also see threatening behavior. Extremely territorial, the male will flare his fins and gill covers at an intruder, and threaten to bite (which he probably never actually does). If the danger seems too extreme, he'll zip into the burrow—tail first.

If you are lucky, you may witness courtship behavior, as a male tries to entice a female into sharing his burrow by swimming rapidly about, arching his back, with his fins spread toward her. And, if you are very fortunate and get close enough to make out the smallest detail, you may see the result of a successful courtship—after mating, the male, one of the sea's most dutiful fathers, carries the entire incubating batch of eggs in his mouth until they hatch. Pausing from his guardianship only long enough to eat occasionally, he will carefully deposit the eggs deep in the burrow, grab a quick snack, then gently pick them all back up, one by one, keeping them safe and protected in his mighty—though tiny—jaws.

So, next time you're diving in the Caribbean, anywhere from Florida and The Bahamas to Barbados and Venezuela, find a rubble-covered sand flat and slow down for a close look. You're likely to be rewarded by the discovery of one of nature's splendid, small creatures—the yellowhead jawfish. 🐟



A little pinch between the tooth and gum.... For the brood of yellowhead jawfish (*Opistognathus aurifrons*), life begins in the protected environs of dad's mouth.

WHERE TO FIND THEM

Sand and coral rubble in depths from 10 to 100 feet, from south Florida through the Caribbean.

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Questions About Injuries

BY FRED BOVE, M.D., PH.D.



If you fracture a rib, the sharp edge of the broken rib can perforate the lung and cause a pneumothorax.

Most of us have broken a bone or two, and when the fracture is healed, think nothing of getting back to diving. Although most injuries will not impair future diving, those described below are serious enough to warrant a question regarding return to diving after recovery.

Traumatic Pneumothorax

QUESTION: I recently had a bicycle accident that resulted in several fractured ribs and a pneumothorax. The pneumothorax was completely resolved two months later. No other abnormalities were found. Can I return to diving?

ANSWER: If you fracture a rib, the sharp edge of the broken rib can perforate the lung and cause a pneumothorax. The fact that the CT scan showed no blebs (other weak areas) suggests that you do not have a congenital problem and would not be likely to have a recurrence. With two years of no recurrence, your risk of getting another pneumothorax is very small. I suggest that you have a consultation from a pulmonary physician familiar with diving who can review your case prior to your return to diving.

Herniated Cervical Disk from Auto Accident

QUESTION: I am a 48 year old male, who has been scuba diving for 15 years, with 180 estimated dives. I had an auto accident resulting in a herniated disk in my neck. Symptoms included numbness, tingling, and moderate weakness. I had physical therapy, anti-inflammatory drugs and two injections into the intervertebral space. I no longer have any tingling or numbness, and my strength, while still slightly reduced on the right side, is

within 90 to 95 percent of my left. Is this a condition that will restrict or eliminate me from scuba diving?

ANSWER: If your cervical disks are now healed, and the residual neurologic abnormality is minimal or absent, there is little likelihood that diving will cause any problem. You can aggravate the disk by lifting heavy objects, but diving per-se will not cause a problem. You should be fully aware of your neurologic findings so you can provide this information if there is concern for a diving related injury. Decompression sickness can cause this type of neurologic problem, and the clinical exam can be quite similar to the findings of a herniated cervical disk. If you know what your current exam shows, comparisons can be made when needed. It is possible to return to diving after this type of injury. Avoid severe strain on your neck by heavy lifting.

Facial Fracture from Boxing

QUESTION: While sparring with a colleague at a boxing gym, I was hit on the left side of my face and suffered a fractured cheek bone. A CT scan showed that I had air around my eye and a fracture of the wall of the eye socket (orbit) with an air leak from my sinuses. The pain cleared in a few days and the fractures healed in about two months. I no longer have pain in the eye, and it appears the air leak has healed. Is it possible to return to diving?

ANSWER: There are several concerns. First, when fluid from the sinuses is forced into the orbit, there is a risk for infection since the sinuses are not sterile. You should discuss the use of antibiotics if the leak recurs. Second, you should not dive if there is any risk of forcing air into the orbit again. This

could easily occur while trying to clear your ears and would have devastating effects on ascent. Remember that the air in the orbit will follow Boyle's law and expand on ascent. If air were in the orbit at the beginning of ascent, you could sustain serious injury to the eye as the air expanded. This same concern applies to flying, where pressure is reduced on ascent. Air in the orbit will expand at altitude and cause severe pain and possible injury to the eye. You must have a well-healed bony partition between the orbit and the

If air were in the orbit [eye socket] at the beginning of ascent, you could sustain serious injury to the eye as the air expanded.

sinuses, and demonstrate that no air enters the orbit when you increase pressure in your nose or sinuses. If any leak persists, you should not dive.

These injuries were extensive, but the individuals recovered and were well enough to consider returning to sport diving. Each of the injuries has a specific problem with diving—the pneumothorax because of concern for another pneumothorax while diving; the neck injury due to aggravation by lifting and confusion with decompression sickness; and the facial injury because of concern for air leaking around the eye and infection. Healing of these injuries may take up to a year, and diving should be avoided until all concern about fracture healing is resolved. When healing is complete and structural integrity of bones and tissues is restored, then diving can be considered. 🐟

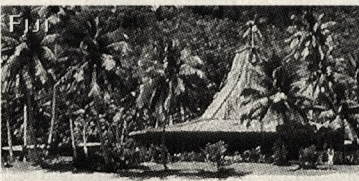


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7 Steps to an Easy Boat Dive

BY JED LIVINGSTON



A little information goes a long way when preparing for a boat dive.

photo/Al Hornsby

Diving from a boat is a great way to get to the far away places without having to take long swims...or walk long distances....

In my last article we explored a new diver's unique opportunities to experience diving "firsts." This time I'll provide tips and practices that can enable new divers to enjoy their first boat dive to the fullest.

Boat diving is a broad category of potential activity. It spans diving platforms from the smallest 10 foot inflatable to luxury live-aboard yachts in excess of 100 feet. In each variation there are many tips and practices that contribute to successful and more enjoyable excursions, but this article will concentrate on those that will apply to any vessel.

1 If diving in U.S. waters, be sure to check that the boat you charter is licensed by the U.S. Coast Guard and is fully equipped with the required safety equipment, as well as adequate diver support and additional safety equipment. While this may seem unnecessary, realize that U.S.

Coast Guard regulations do not extend to all the recommended diver support and safety equipment. For example, it has become a standard diving community practice to carry emergency oxygen but not all charter operators comply.

2 Plan to arrive early—at least one-half hour before departure. Allow for the unexpected when traveling to the boat to avoid being left standing in the parking lot with all of your gear, watching your dive partners wave goodbye from the stern of the boat. Rest assured they'll probably never let you live it down.

3 An important consideration is your dive bag. Make sure it is large enough to hold all of your gear (not including the scuba cylinder) and has a large opening so it is easy to get stuff into and out of the bag. It should also be easy to transport from the car to the boat so you avoid repeat-

ed trips back and forth. If it has wet and dry sections, that's even better, although many divers prefer to bring a separate dive pack or small bag for dry articles.

4 When packing your gear, pack in the reverse of the order you will need it, i.e., the last thing you'll don before jumping into the water is your fins, so put them in the bag first and so on.

5 Once the boat arrives at the dive location listen carefully to the dive briefing and ask questions of the captain and divemaster. Their knowledge and experience is extremely valuable. It is also important to note the general direction of any current and mentally list the indicators of current direction, e.g., kelp, sea grasses, boats at anchor, etc. Mentally cataloging these can be useful when there is a shift in current direction during the dive, because you can adjust your dive plan accordingly. Many divers have had exhausting swims back to the boat because they didn't tune their awareness to the level needed and maintain it throughout the dive.

6 When gearing up for the dive help your buddy and use his or her help to make the process easier. Be aware of others as they gear up so you don't get hit by swinging weightbelts or tanks. Be careful with your own equipment. Don't hit others with it, and don't leave it laying on the deck for others to trip over.

7 If you haven't checked in a while or if you're wearing a different equipment setup, thicker or thinner wetsuit, or steel versus aluminum cylinder, do a buoyancy check near the swim step or boarding ladder. This way you know you are wearing the right amount of ballast before the dive.

Charter operations are interested in your having an enjoyable experience. If you're unsure about something, ask first. Ask any question that comes to mind about the dive location, the boat operation, galley rules and the like. The old adage, "There are no dumb questions, just dumb mistakes," certainly applies at sea. The crews are usually keen to share their stories and answer your questions so that you'll come back

Ask any question that comes to mind about the dive location, the boat operation, galley rules and the like.

next time you want to go diving.

Diving from a boat is a great way to get to the far away places without having to take long swims, enter through surf, or walk long distances on the beach or rocky shorelines. Like other methods of getting to the dive site and the dive itself, a healthy dose of common sense, training, and responsible diving practices can assure a safer and more enjoyable day of diving.

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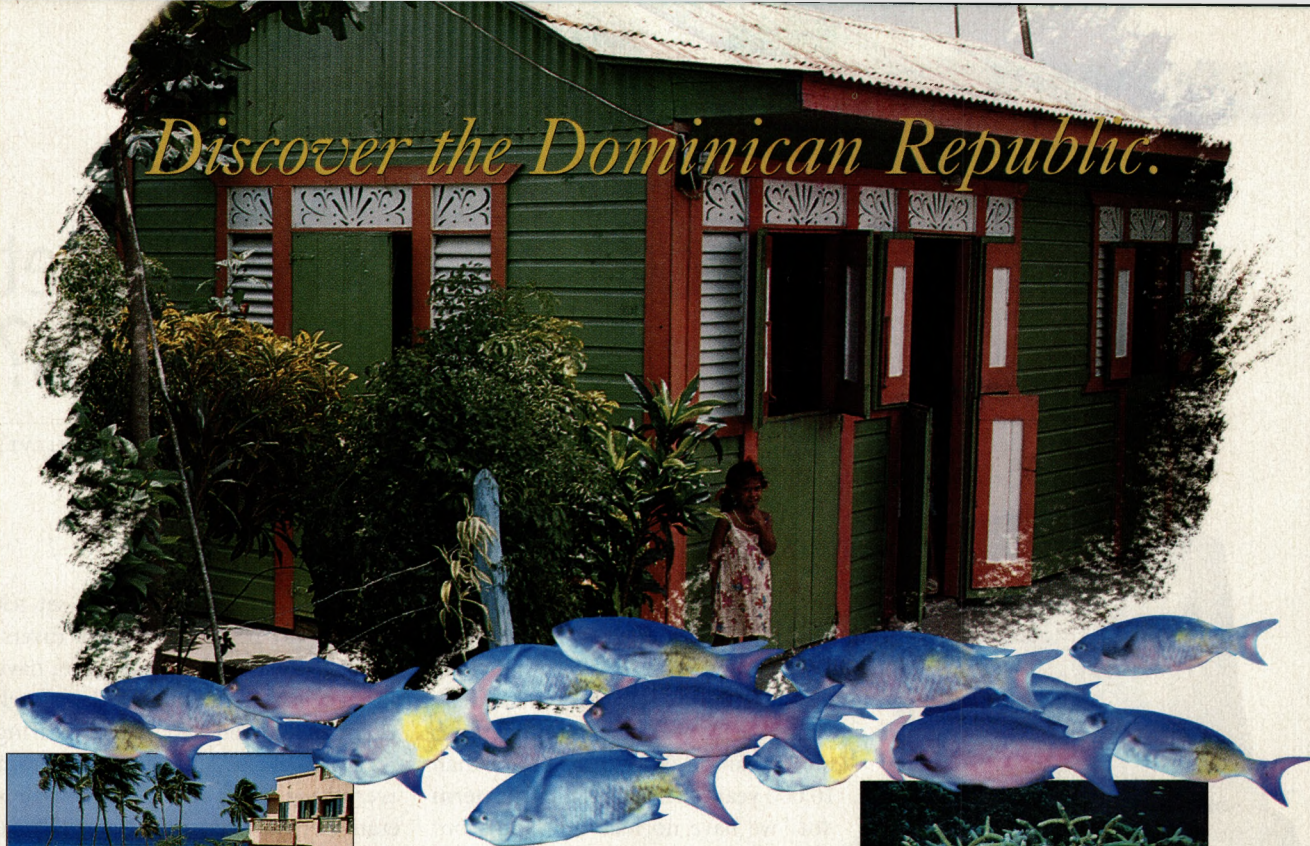
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This is Your Brain in a Bucket Any Questions?

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY KARL SHREEVES



Based on carbon 14, geological stratification, “best if consumed before...” labels and other dating stuff dating criteria, we know the stalactites in Mexico’s underwater caves have hung there for more than 10,000 years, “more than 10,000 years” being the scientific term for “we have no idea how long, but we’ve ruled out between now and 10,000 years ago.” Ten thousand years is a long time.

It’s the time in office for at least 1,250 presidents (or 2,500 Jimmy Carters). It’s 70,000 dog years. It’s a long time, approaching the interval between when my ex-wife would say “I’m ready” and when we actually left to go somewhere.

So what are the odds that after 10,000 years—without bumping or hitting it—a stalactite will let go at a particular moment, such as exactly when I’m swimming underneath it? Pretty damn good, apparently. Good thing I had my helmet on.

So what are the odds that after 10,000 years...a stalactite will let go...exactly when I’m swimming underneath it? Pretty damn good, apparently.

When In Rome...

Helmets, like double tanks, set tek divers apart from recreational divers. While recreational divers seldom have a need for helmets, you’ll see tek wreck divers and cave divers wearing “brain buckets.” And, like just about everything in tek diving, helmets generate debate and controversy. Those who advocate them do so first for noggin protection (an issue relating to falling debris or conking overhead objects while scootering in tight confines), and second to provide a mount for hands-free lighting while negotiating a wreck, jotting data during a cave survey, or juggling camera and strobe during a night dive.

Those who shun helmets point to the added drag and, when used for a light mount, the tendency to blind your buddies whenever you look their way. These individuals observe that falling objects aren’t that common (in many environments) and that you won’t bang your head while scootering if you use proper technique.

Actually, both sides have a point; helmet use tends to be situational. Working wide open passages in caves (even on scooters) or in stable, intact wrecks, helmets seem to have more cons than pros, and most tek divers avoid them. In deteriorating wrecks or caves with low, tight sidemount passages, falling objects and bonking your head seem inevitable, and divers there tend to favor helmets. The local dive culture often reflects these environmental differences: cutting edge Missouri divers frown on you for wearing a helmet, whereas if you’re pushing line in a Mexican sidemount

cave, the locals think you're crazy if you don't.

Personally, I wear or don't wear my helmet to fit the circumstances. Though I usually find the local attitude accurately reflects whether to use a helmet in the local environment, I make my own decisions. After all, it's my head.

Encasing Your Cranium

Interestingly, there are very few "dive helmets" presently on the market. So, many tekks adapt other helmets to their own purposes. These

have to add or modify it.

Mounting a light requires holes and hardware. (Tip: try to angle lights somewhat downward to reduce their buddy blinding potential.) Most divers mount small lights—the size that takes two or three C cell batteries—or cave/wreck light heads with separate (waist-mounted) battery packs. Normally, you can pull the light free for hand use and replace it as the need arises. Some overly optimistic divers (like me) have mounted surprisingly large lights directly on a helmet. I once bolted two UK400

...cutting edge Missouri divers frown on you for wearing a helmet, whereas if you're pushing line in a Mexican sidemount cave, the locals think you're crazy if you don't.

include helmets used for hockey, rollerblade/skateboarding, whitewater rafting, and bicycling. I've seen a diver try a construction hard hat (although it wasn't too effective, because it didn't stay put), and another who made a small helmet by heating, bending, and trimming a piece of plastic to fit his head contours.

Two factors tend to dictate choice: purpose and availability. Divers mainly interested in a light platform choose the smallest, closest fitting helmet possible to minimize bulk and drag. Divers interested in protection choose something with padding and shock resistance, which means they have to put up with more bulk and water resistance.

Most divers end up modifying their choice to some extent: If the back reaches close to the neck, you may need to trim it so you can tilt your head back while swimming. Padding may need to come out to fit over a wetsuit hood. You need a chin strap to keep the helmet on; if your choice doesn't have one, or the one supplied doesn't do the job adequately, you'll

lights (each takes four D cells) to a helmet—lots of light but tremendous drag and it made me look like Mickey Mouse. It was so heavy that I ended up taking it off most of the time to spare my neck. In the end, I eighty-sixed that idea in favor of (guess what?) mounting a compact three C cell light and a light head.

Whether you choose to bucket your brain or not is, ultimately, your choice. Appropriately, the consequences are your responsibility. Needless to say, no manufacturer warrants a helmet once you drill holes through it, rip out the padding, trim off bits, and use it in an environment for which it was never intended. Whether you choose to helmet yourself, and whether your helmet choice will protect you reflect your choices and affect your risk.

As I said, I don't always wear a helmet when tek diving, but I weigh the options based on the environment and the dive planned. My helmet bears more than one scar tallying the times when I was glad I wore it. Like when the stalactite got me. 🐟

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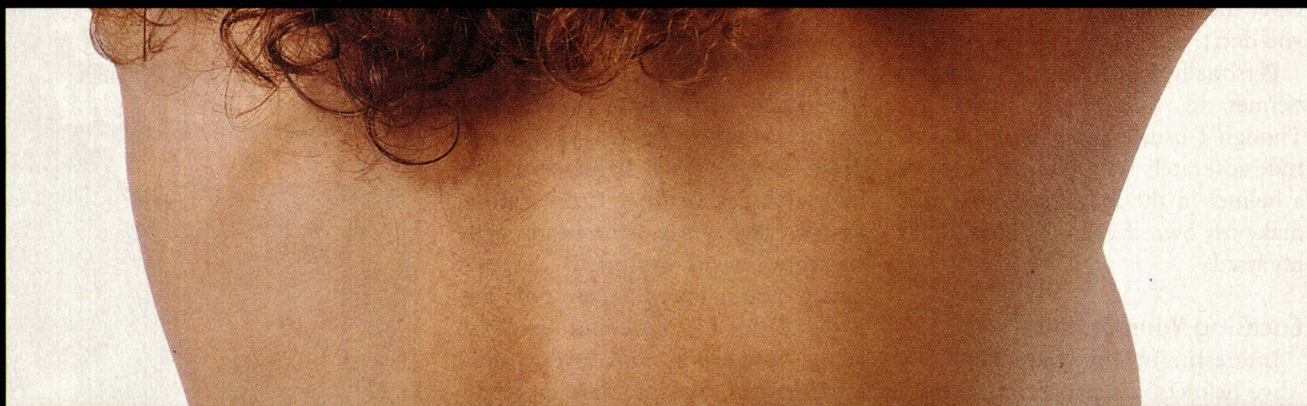
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by ty sawyer

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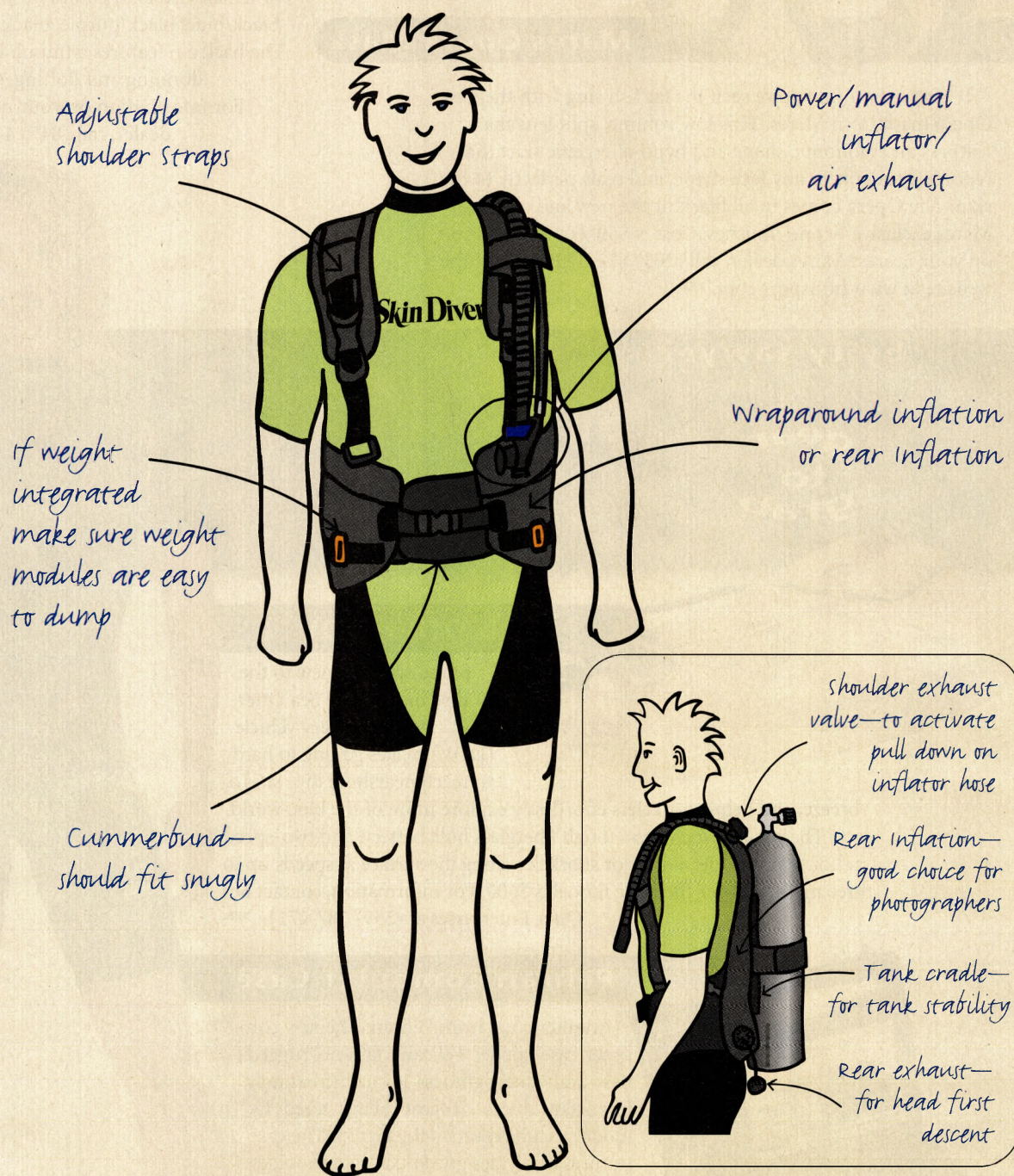
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How to Buy a BC

BY KEN KURTIS • ILLUSTRATION BY KIMBERLY RICHEY



A buoyancy compensator can be your buddy or a pain in the you-know-what. It can make a dive easy and enjoyable or a chore. Choosing the right one requires a little planning and thinking.

Fit & Comfort

Nothing's worse than an ill-fitting BC. An inflated BC that's too large wants to rise up and your body—because it's weighted—wants to go down. A BC that's too small feels like it's squeezing the life out of you.

There's a distinction between a warm water fit and a cold water fit. In warm water, you wear very little thermal protection so there's no bulk to change the way the BC fits. For warm water diving, trying the BC on over street clothes is fine.

For cold water diving, you won't get the proper fit unless you try the BC on with the wetsuit.

For both warm water and cold water diving, you'll have to make some trade-offs. If you do mostly cold water diving, fit the BC that way, and when you use it in warm water, it will be a bit big. If you do mostly warm water dives, fit it that way, but realize the BC will seem a little snug for cold water dives.

Rear Inflation vs. Wraparound

It used to be that your only choice in a buoyancy compensator was a horsecollar. But the stabilizing jacket revolutionized BC design. (Although you can still find horsecollar BCs, most are designed for snorkeling.) Your first decision is whether you want a wraparound or rear inflation design. With the wraparound, the air cell encircles your body and concentrates the biggest volume of air around your hips, which means you ride slightly higher out of the water.

Rear-inflation BCs put the entire air cell behind you. They offer more freedom of arm movement and are good choices for photographers. However, because the air is behind you, the BC may tip you forward (which can be counteracted with the addition of a tank weight).

Weight Integrated or Not

Divers hate wearing weightbelts (thus the proliferation of weight-integrated BCs). But if you dive in cooler waters where you need a full wetsuit, you can get a hernia trying to don a fully laden weight integrated BC. A solution to this problem is finding a

BC with easily removable weight pockets. This allows you to insert the weight pockets after you've donned the BC and remove the weight pockets at the end of the dive before you take off your BC and tank.

Lift

You're not trying to float a battleship. Bigger is not always better. And it's not too hard to calculate the amount of lift you need. Just add 5 to 10 pounds of lift to the amount of

shoulders are lower than your hips, the air in the BC won't vent from the shoulder dump. If you typically descend head first, you will want to look for a BC with a rear exhaust (found at the bottom of the BC). Just reach back and grab the rear valve (which will now be the highest part of the BC) and vent off any remaining air. Many BCs have exhaust valves in both places.

Pockets

Make sure you can get to them

Key Areas in Fitting a BC

Shoulders

This area should fit snugly. If the BC is adjustable and you have to pull the shoulder adjustments all the way down, go to a smaller size.

Lapels

When deflated, the lapels of the BC (this only works on a wraparound design) should touch. If there's a lot of overlap, go down a size. If they don't touch when deflated (they're going to expand as you inflate the BC), go to a larger size.

Cummerbund

Look for at least a three inch overlap, slightly more if you'll also use it for cold water diving. If you'll be wearing a weightbelt, the cummerbund shouldn't cover it.

Length

The bottom of the BC should be somewhere around your hip joint.

Arm holes

They should be wide enough to allow you easy movement, but not so big that the BC will ride up.

weight you normally wear. If you wear 20 pounds (like a typical, male, cold water diver), a BC with 25 to 30 pounds of lift should suffice. In warm water, where you might wear 10 pounds or less, a BC with 15 to 20 pounds of lift will do the job. If you'll use the BC for both cold and warm water diving, go with the greater lift.

Exhaust Valves

"I need more weight!" is the battle cry of the chronically overinflated. "Dump all the air out of your BC!" is the response given most often. Being able to easily vent the air from your BC is extremely important.

Let's start with the rapid exhaust valve on the inflator hose. This sits high on your shoulder. When you pull down on the inflator hose (at the bottom), it opens the valve at the top, allowing the air to vent.

But this doesn't work if you're descending head first. Since your

easily. If you normally wear a wetsuit, access the pocket with your wetsuit jacket on. The angle of a zippered pocket will make a big difference in how easy it is to open and close. Velcro opens easier, but is not as secure.

Material Durability

Ask about the thread count of the material for the BC. The higher the count, the more dense the material, and the longer it should last. A cave diver scraping against walls needs a more durable BC than someone who's cruising the reefs of Bonaire.

The Bottom Line

Buying a BC is no small investment. Prices run anywhere from \$200 to \$650, more if you get into some of the tek models. But spending the right amount of money for a BC that will be comfortable, provide proper buoyancy, and get you adequate floatation is an investment well worth making. 



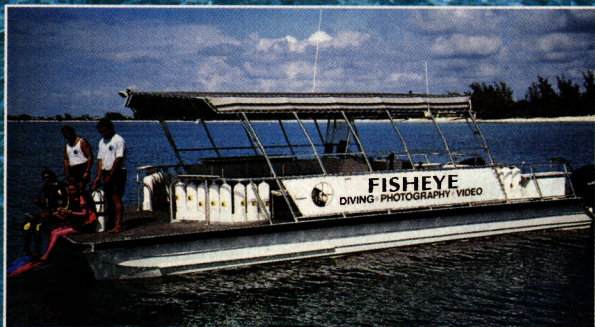
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Shark Shooter

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY AL HORNSBY

Getting a “keeper” shot can be the result of careful planning and set-up, pure luck, or as is often the case with wildlife photography, a combination of both. This particular photo is a good example.



A reef blacktip shark bursts through a huge school of blue-stripe snappers during a shark feed off Moorea.

I was in Moorea, where there is a great shark dive. I had two camera systems with me: a Nikon RS with a 20–35mm zoom lens and twin SB 104 strobes; and a Nikonos V with a 15mm lens, also with twin SB 104s, for larger views. Both systems had the strobes mounted very wide on Technical Lighting Control arms to provide even lighting; they were aimed about 30 degrees toward the outside of the camera to minimize backscatter, which is important in shark feed photography, with all those food particles in the water. As always, I also had a mild magenta gel over my strobes to reduce their slightly yellowish cast, adding a little color overall and creating more natural skin tones for the divers. Both cameras were loaded with Fuji Provia,

which has excellent blues for backgrounds, shows nice bright color under flash fill and, at 100 ISO, is fast enough to handle the dimmer light at the depths—75 feet—that we would be working.

I noticed the sharks were starting to streak through the huge school of blue-stripe snappers that had gathered around the feeder. The sharks were moving fast, and as they burst through, the fish scattered in all directions—there was so much raw, animal energy.

To capture this on film, I needed preset focus with a maximum depth of field—there would be no opportunity to focus once I was in the middle of the action. This made the Nikonos and 15mm perfect. I also wanted to capture the movement against a natural blue background, so I set a slow shutter speed of 1/30th of a second (so the fast things would blur just a little) and took a light meter reading to make sure my background was blue, not black. I like to take my background about one f/stop underexposed, which will make the blues a little richer and the subjects lit by the strobe “pop” with bright color against the deeper background. I also set my strobes on TTL, knowing that with things happening fast, the technology would be far more capable than me in estimating the proper flash output. I also knew that the strobes would freeze what they illuminated most brightly—hopefully, creating a sharp main subject against slightly speed-blurred surroundings.

With all that done, I went into the school of snappers where the sharks were bursting through. And in just a little while, Wow! There I was, nose to nose with a reef blacktip, with just the briefest instant to fire off one memorable, lucky shot—a keeper. 🦈

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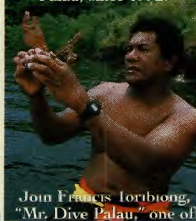
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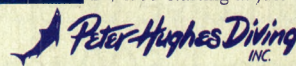
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Deco Table Questions and Cetacea Quandary

By E.R. CROSS

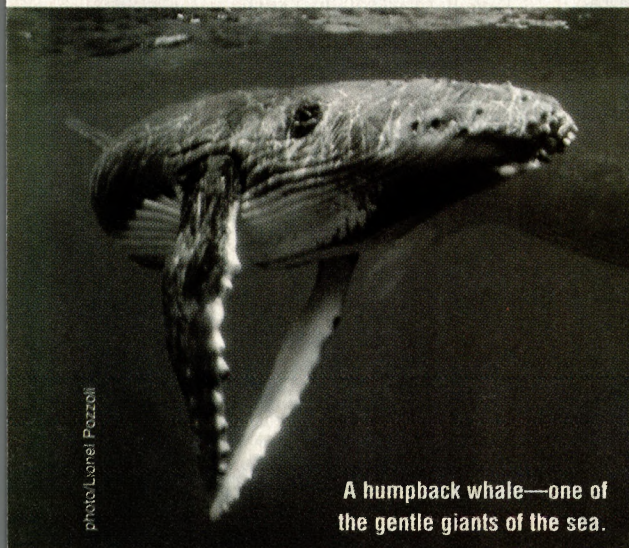


photo: Lionel Pizzoli

A humpback whale—one of the gentle giants of the sea.

Most air breathing sea mammals can dive deeper than 1,500 feet, and their time submerged can be much longer than ten minutes.

Any safety factor in a decompression schedule, whether in table form or a computer profile, depends on the divers and how closely they follow all prescribed decompression data. Keep in mind that decompression instruction for a specific table or a meter is prescribed and not simply recommended. For any decompression program to provide a safe ascent, all instructions must be followed carefully.

An Australian wrote, "I read your column each month and wonder if you would clear up the following points for me. In studying different decompression tables I have noticed a considerable difference in the times and sometimes depths (to be used in following the tabular information) compared with the U.S. Navy tables. Which of these data should we comply with when establishing our deco times and depths?"

Each manual (or lecture if instructions are given in a class) should contain complete facts for the use of the table being discussed. Follow the instructions carefully for depth and times prescribed for the dive in question. These data are not interchangeable between the different tables. Differences in tables are not because of tissue saturation times, pressure at depths or duration of times change. Rather, it is because authors of the tables have, for one reason or another, changed bottom times, rates of ascent, or deco-stop depths and times as reference points. Usually, but not always,

these changes are made in an effort to produce shorter decompression times for dives at indicated depths and times. If no instructions are available, either in published or lecture form, it is suggested the tables not be used.

Study the tables you have available. You may find one that will provide a decompression profile more suitable to your diving style or that will better meet the need of your diving tasks. Deco tables in early U.S. Navy diving manuals were "long" or "slow" tables. More words of caution: do not try to mix and match deco tables and computers. Do not "fudge" on either depth or time when profiling a decompression schedule. Not all, but most, bends cases are the result of infractions, sometimes minor, in the use of the tables. As stated before, no table or deco meter is 100 percent certain in the prevention of bends under all diving conditions.

Youth Starts as a Breathhold Diver

A letter from a breathhold diver in Hawaii stated, "My name is Alex and I am 12 years old. I recently began training in snorkeling and breathhold diving. I can already dive to a depth of 20 feet for nearly one minute. A few days ago we saw some whales while we were on a training dive. While we were resting between dives the instructor told us that some whales can dive to depths of more than 1,500 feet and remain for as long as ten minutes." Apparently the new freediver doubted these statements. He asked, "Can whales dive that deep and stay for such a long time?"

There is a deep ocean of fantasy sur-

rounding these giant animals of the sea. The scientific name for these aquatic mammals is Cetacea; a group of mammals characterized by adaptation to a completely aquatic form of life. The term "whale" includes about 75 species such as sperm, bottle-nosed, beaked, killer, false killer and pilot whales to mention just a few of the more common whales. The Cetacea class of mammals also includes several little known whales such as the brydes, pygmy right whale, narwhal, the all-white beluga whale, and of course, the many dolphins and porpoises.

Most air breathing sea mammals can dive deeper than 1,500 feet, and their time submerged can be much longer than ten minutes. Cetaceans vary greatly in size, ranging from four feet to 100 feet in length, and from 100 pounds to 150 tons. The blue whale is much larger than an elephant and even larger than the largest of the now extinct dinosaurs.

Cetaceans are well adapted to their marine environment and have been "practicing" their skills in nearly every type of water on the planet for millions of years. They are found in every ocean, many rivers, estuaries and in one freshwater lake about 600 miles from the ocean. From the moment a cetacean is born it can swim and fend for itself but nurses from its protective mother for nearly one year. Some whales, particularly killer whales, live in tightly knit family pods.

In 1988, several of the Cetaceans were listed as endangered species; the blue, with a world population of perhaps 14,000, and the southern right whale, with an estimated population of only 3,000. On the flip side, the sperm whale had an estimated population of nearly two million animals. Due to stringent conservation measures, these figures have probably changed in the past decade.

As to abilities underwater, Alex need not worry about ever equaling the diving skills of any of the Cetacea.

A long time favorite book on whales and whaling is Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*, first published in 1851. A more recent book is *Jacques Cousteau—Whales*, by Jacques Yves Cousteau. Both may be available in bookstores or in your local library. 🐳

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Where You Go Once You've Gone Pro

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY BILL HARRIGAN

How many divemasters and dive instructors does the world need? A lot more apparently, because dive training centers are currently reporting more job requests from dive operations in the U.S., Caribbean, and Pacific than they can fill. Once you get that instructor rating, though, what does your job horizon look like? Becoming an instructor is only the beginning of the road, you have to figure out where you want to go from there.

I watched a NASA documentary the other day that showed one of those training sessions where they submerge mock-ups of space shuttle components in a pool and practice the next mission underwater. There were several divers working with the astronauts and I thought, "Now, that's a cool job!" I may never have the opportunity to go into space, but I could easily be part of the team in that pool. It looked like a job that was challenging, meaningful, and fun—a combination that's hard to beat. I found myself wondering how those divers got that job. Did they have some special training? Where did they get it? And what other unusual diving related jobs are available to someone with the right training?

The next morning I called Bob Brayman at the International Diving Career Institute at Hall's in Marathon, Florida, figuring he could answer my questions. I had visited Hall's several times before and knew they ran an

outstanding job placement program. According to Bob, the diversity of jobs available to someone with advanced diving skills is amazing.

It turned out that a recent Hall's graduate went to work for one of the NASA contractors that manufactures the pool mock-ups and was doing exactly the work I described. Another Hall's graduate was the diving activities supervisor for the film crew of the movie *Jaws III*. Others have gone to work as dive instructors in marine law enforcement, with police forces in coastal areas, and with the National Park Service. Several now work in the cruise ship industry, as aquatics program managers and instructors. Obviously, there are jobs for well-trained divers in some surprising

An instructor goes over the finer points of using a semi-closed circuit rebreather with students.



places, in some cases far away from boats and the ocean, such as in aquariums in large inland cities.

There are also other positions where advanced diving skills are important, but secondary considerations. Many owners of dive, charter or live-aboard boats, for instance, would prefer to hire captains who are also certified dive instructors. Many of the staff on dive magazines such as this one have advanced dive training of some kind. Whether you are designing photo layouts or selling advertising, it helps to know the sport intimately. The same applies to working for a travel agency specializing in dive travel or becoming a dive equipment sales representative. Advanced diving skills enhance the performance of people in jobs such as these even though diving is not their primary occupation.

I have been in that position several times in the past. When I was working for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, my diving skills were important in landing some of my best assignments, including one

The trick is to decide what most interests you about diving and then get the training and experience to advance in that direction.

as manager of the Key Largo National Marine Sanctuary. Management skills were the first priority in that case, but the ability to dive was clearly a vital secondary skill. The situation and needs would be the same for research

positions in almost any state or federal marine park.

The trick is to decide what most interests you about diving and then get the training and experience to advance in that direction.

So, what training do you need to land jobs such as these? The answer goes beyond the skills needed to teach new students how to dive or to organize a safe dive for a group of certified divers. Diversified jobs need diversified skills such as equipment maintenance, underwater communications systems, videography and photography, accident management, dive travel booking, boat operations, and rebreather instruction. This is the kind of training you can get at career training centers such as Hall's.

For more information on diversified employment opportunities in recreational diving, call Bob Brayman's International Diving Career Institute at (800) 331-4255 in the U.S., except Florida. From other locations, call (305) 743-5929 or fax (305) 743-8168. 🐠

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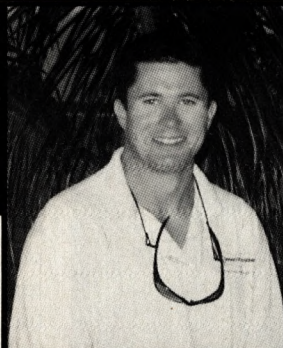
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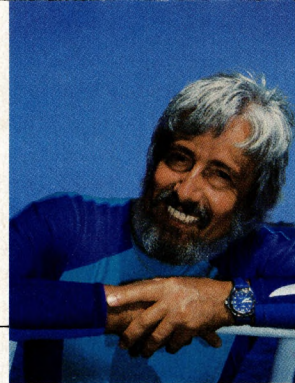
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Sharks—The Jaws of Life

BY JEAN-MICHEL COUSTEAU



Anybody who knows me well knows I love sharks. I am not exactly alone in this, but it isn't a very big club. Most people are still influenced by *Jaws* and other films that turn the shark's natural role as a predator into proof of its ultimate evil. To put this in perspective, imagine a film of a child eating a hamburger as proof of humanity's evil intentions.

Despite their absurdity, these fears die hard. My own fear is that they may outlive sharks themselves. Believe it or not, many sharks are endangered, and where they are not endangered, they are under immense pressure.

Where beach tourism has become a primary source of income, sharks are eradicated—in Hawaii it is the tiger shark, in Australia the great white. As a result, smaller species of sharks profit from the absence of top predators and deplete fish populations.

The fishing industry exacts the greatest toll. In the Sea of Cortez and off the Galapagos Islands, hammerheads are killed by longlines and gill nets, often to the point of localized extinction. In Australia, fisheries built around schooling sharks have collapsed from overfishing. Worldwide, the incidental

killing of sharks in nets set for other species of fish (bycatch) has reached unprecedented levels.

Overfishing of sharks and the threat to their survival is not a problem for the developing world alone: divers in

the Santa Barbara Channel Islands recently filmed the carcass of a basking shark that had been finned and discarded. In 1994, the retail prices for shark fin attained an all-time high, surpassing \$200 per pound in the markets of San Francisco and Los Angeles. Populations of blue and thresher sharks have declined noticeably along the California coast.

The problem is complex. As the human population grows and sources of traditional food fish are exhausted, sharks become attractive targets. Spurred by the decimation of sharks, the United States National Marine Fisheries Service imposed strict regulations in 1993 for shark fishing along the east coast, the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean. Unfortunately, the regulations ignore the West Coast, and despite isolated local restrictions, the waters off California are now the center of a growing international shark fishery.

In the short term, we must put pressure on legislators to protect sharks. As with whales and dolphins, governmental and non-governmental organizations need to work with the fishing industry on an international level to stem the slaughter of sharks.

There are signs that this is already happening. The U.S. is taking the lead with its fishing restrictions, which need to be extended. Abroad, the government is working to make exporting shark products to the U.S. less attractive. One initiative in particular deserves mention: a joint U.S.-Ecuadoran initiative attacks the economic incentives to shark plunder in the Galapagos by suppressing the import and transit of shark products through the U.S.

Second, we must coordinate our research of entire food webs, so that we can better understand the size and



photo/Bill Harrigan

Divers exploring a wreck site in The Bahamas cross paths with a curious Caribbean reef shark.

needs of shark populations. This will help us protect their ranges.

Thirdly, I think we must get the word out that sharks are worth more alive than dead. As divers, this is where we can really perform a useful service. The more we publicize our positive experiences the more we will erode the wall of fear and ignorance surrounding these magnificent animals.

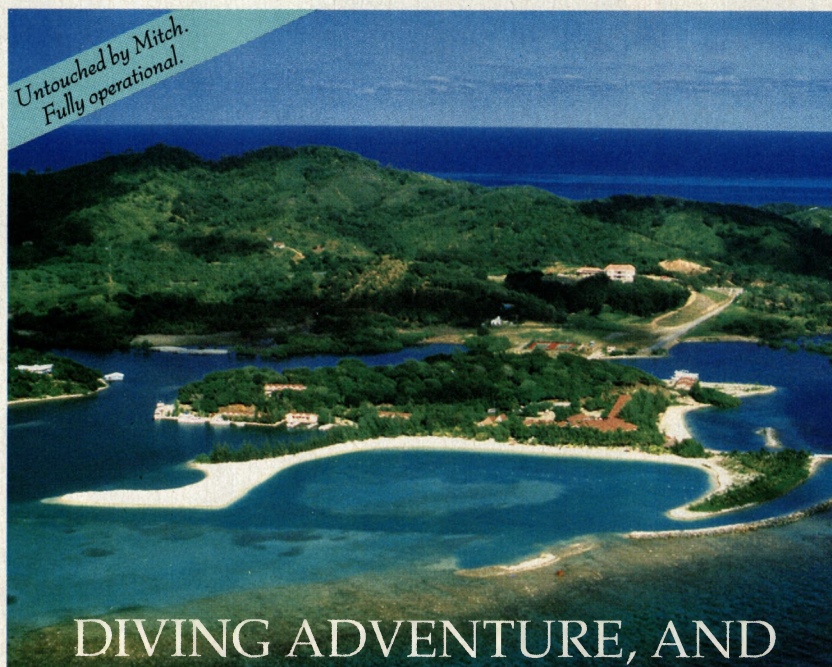
Dive tourism is already seizing this opportunity. Worldwide, more than 150 sites now offer shark dive experiences, but tourism isn't the only way to bring home the message of sharks' value. Science can also play a role. Last year, in the pages of *Scientific American*, scientist Gary Litman investigated the similarities between human and shark immune systems. Both have a spleen and a thymus, sources of antibodies that bind to and destroy invading matter, such as viruses and bacteria, called antigens.

...we must get
the word out
that sharks are
worth more alive
than dead.

Scientists are now learning to synthesize various pharmaceutical products from the shark immune system to help people. How ironic that sharks may now be seen as the "jaws of life!"

On a deeper level, in probing the immune system we may have uncovered the point at which our lineages diverged. It would be a tragedy if, just as we are discovering another link between ourselves and sharks, our own actions destroy the relationship before it fully develops.

Finally, we must learn to leave sharks alone and let the oceanic system work. Let us intelligently reduce the competition for fish and space, even as we work to slow our own population growth. Sharks are the top predators of the deep; their presence is crucial to the vitality of the seas and to the productivity of oceanic ecosystems. 🐟



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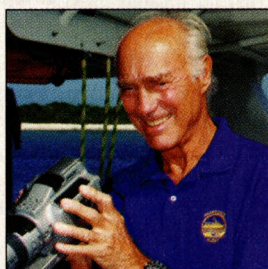
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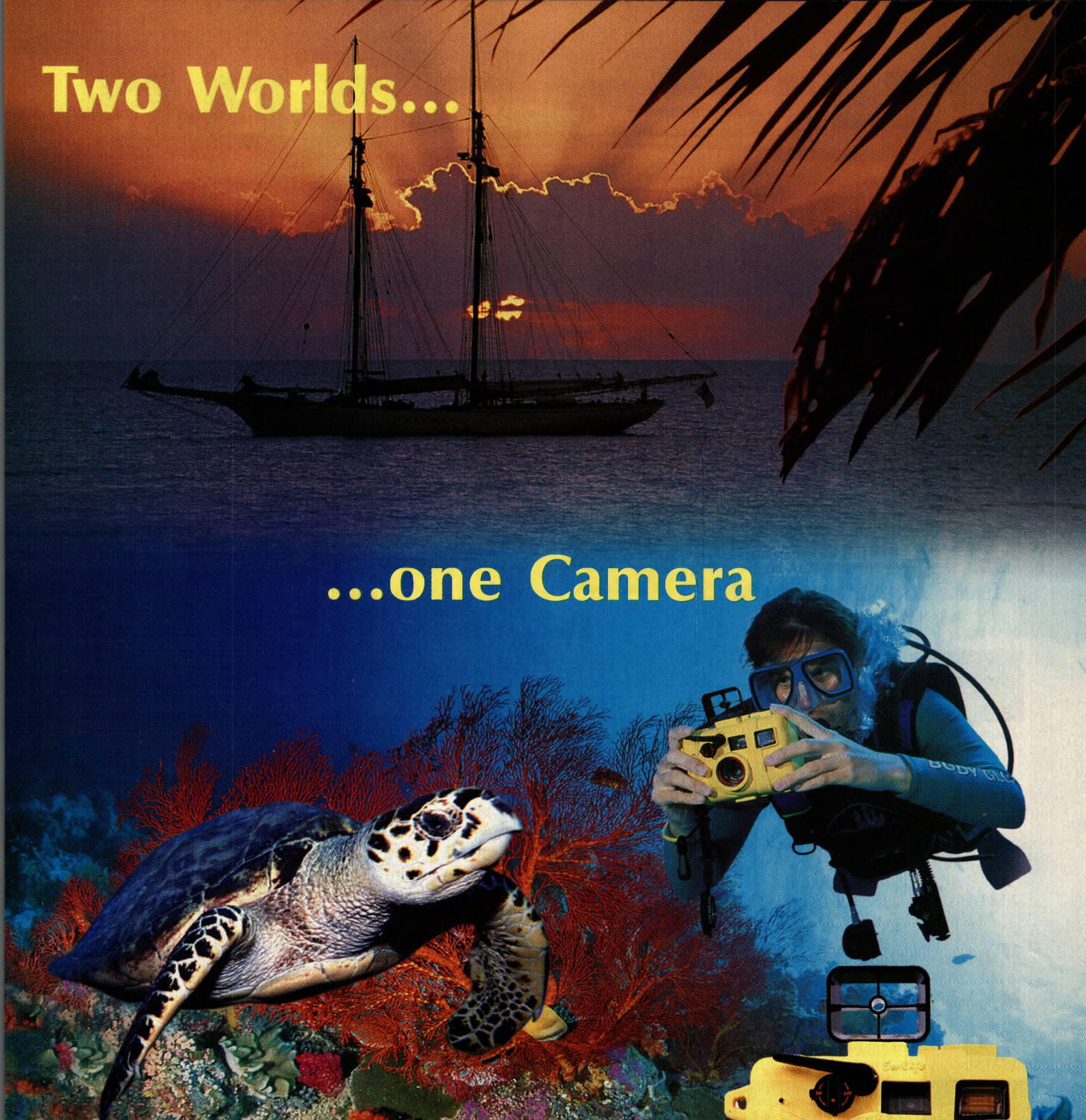
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know thy gear

This is the Story of
How a Mechanically
Disinclined Man
Infiltrated a Scuba
Equipment Repair
Course and Not Only
Survived, But Learned
Something Valuable.

BY TY SAWYER

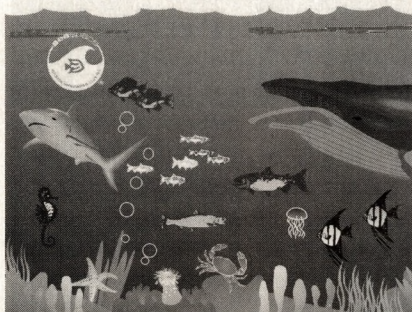
At home, my wife fixes everything. The tool box is hers, the knowledge of how to use the tools has almost exclusively been her realm, even the basic identity of the tools has tended to elude me. I am a shop rock with only vestigial mechanical aptitude.

When it comes to my dive equipment, I implicitly trust the equipment guru at my local dive shop to keep everything functioning efficiently. I'm a turn it on and go kind of person. So, needless to say, I approached this assignment not so much with reluctance as with sheer bafflement and dread. As it turned out, I have been pulling off a very clever ruse. The mysterious inner workings of all that stuff I depend on while diving has been exposed, and I feel, well, confident to tackle almost any equipment situation,

and, well, sad that I hadn't taken a class like this many, many years ago.

The participants of the class were instructed to bring in a first and second stage, SPG console, BC, and tank (emptied of air). After general introductions, the instructor began lifting the shroud of mystery piece by piece. (All of the participants, despite our surprising amount of experience, were equally timid about fixing the basic mechanics of their gear.)

Each step of the process was entirely hands-on. If it could be disassembled in the field and fixed, we did it. We began with the inner workings and types of first stages, then took apart our second stages, including hose connections, moved on to our consoles and BC power inflator, taking apart hose connections and removing valves on these, too. (There



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are special methods to removing certain hose connections, so I would recommend taking a repair course even for those of you who are a little more bold about your equipment.) Each aspect—venturi assist, diaphragm, cracking pressure, user ad-

put it back together that the normally four hour class extended to six then eight hours. Once the demystification had begun we all realized what a simple and valuable skill this was. No more lost dives to regulator or BC power inflator freeflows, broken O-

Each step of the process was entirely hands-on. If it could be disassembled in the field and fixed, we did it.

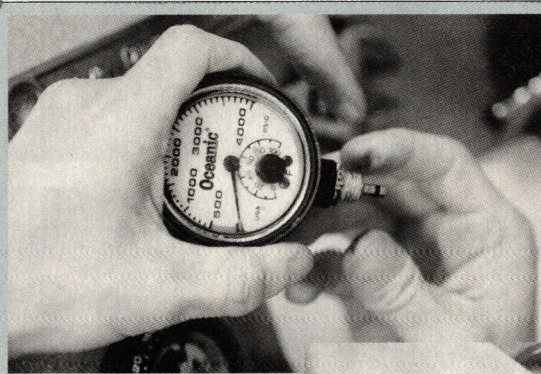
justments, schrader valve and HP swivel spool replacement, etc.—of the equipment was discussed as to function, possible problems and adjustment benefits, and, of course, fixes.

As we had a broad selection of man-

rings, SPG failure—almost everything we learned to fix could be done on a dive boat in less than five minutes with a simple set of tools and easily purchased parts. Looking back at all the times a dive day could've been sal-

vaged with a tidbit of knowledge (by taking a course like this sooner) made all of us cringe.

After an impromptu



One of easiest, but most impactful, fixes taught by the course was the HP swivel spool for the SPG.

ufacturer's gear (brought by the students) to look over, this proved valuable on two fronts. One, being able to identify problems and fix one's own gear by understanding the operation of it; and learning about the pros and cons of the wide variety of features offered on other equipment—a bit of knowledge that will come in handy when purchasing new gear or helping a friend out in the field.

Special tools, of course, are required, and the ideal save-a-dive tool kit was displayed and discussed, and we got to use the tools, too.

Once our group had overcome its initial hesitation to strip apart the very gear we would use on the next day's dive, we proved so eager to take apart all of our equipment, check the condition of the various components, and

late lunch, we all removed the valves of our tanks and took a gander inside. For this we moved from the classroom to the shop. While looking inside the tanks was fascinating and informative, finding any deficiencies still requires a professional's attention.

At the end of the day, without getting wet, we all left better divers. We left more knowledgeable, comfortable with, and unafraid of our equipment. The class I had dreaded turned into one of the most valuable days of learning (pertaining to scuba) I had yet invested time in. When you think about how important a diver's equipment is to his/her well-being, a course such as this makes perfect sense. What didn't make perfect sense was why I hadn't taken it earlier. 🐠



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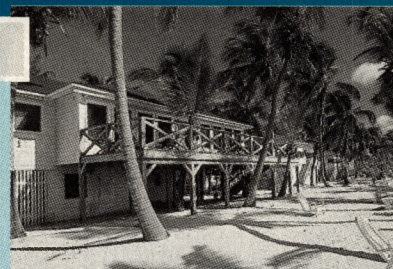
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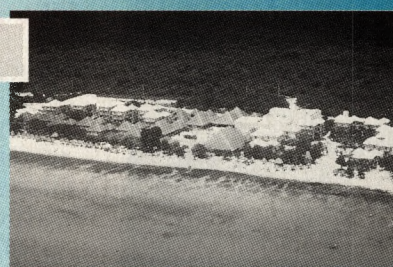
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DIVER'S LIBRARY

BY HEATHER BROWN

Welcome to the Diver's Library where each month we share which books, videos, and computer software are our favorite picks for any diver's bookshelf. So come on in, grab a cappuccino and browse.

Jim Church's Essential Guide to Composition by Jim Church



From the master of underwater photography, this guide to composition first teaches the rules of underwater photography and then tells how to bend them for extraordinary results. Church's approach eliminates the guesswork from taking better pictures, while inspiring professionals and hobbyists alike to turn a new eye to the underwater realm. To learn even more about capturing U/W images, check out *Jim Church's Essential Guide to Underwater Video* and *Jim Church's Essential Guide to Nikonos Systems*, Aqua Quest Publications, Inc., (800) 933-8989, \$19.95.

Reef Fish Identification CD-ROM: Florida, Caribbean, Bahamas

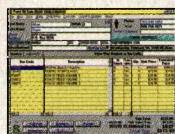
by Paul Humann



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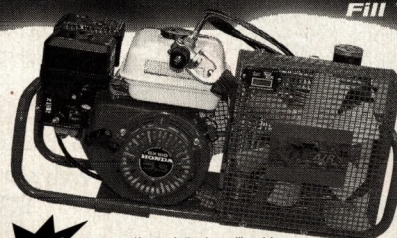
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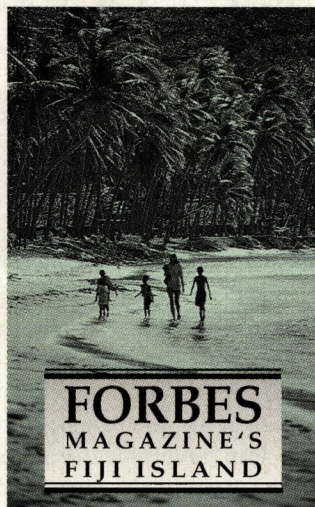
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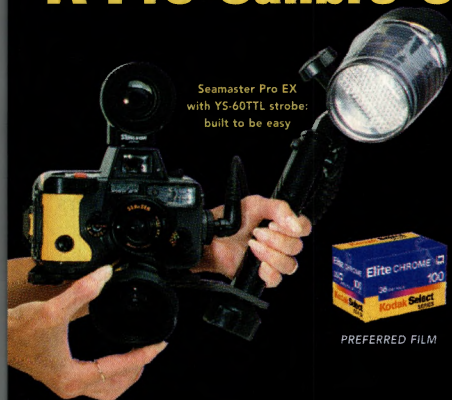
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Citizen Eco-Drive Aqualand Dive Watch

For divers, time and depth are so interwoven that our lives literally depend upon our acute awareness of each while underwater.

Strangely, though, most watches aimed at the dive market seem to ignore the depth factor, which makes them little more than water resistant timepieces. Citizen's new Eco-Drive Aqualand breaks the depth barrier and puts it into a handsome watch fit for today's world of heightened ecological awareness.

The Eco-Drive portion of the Aqualand refers to the technology that allows the watch to run on the clean, pollution free power of light alone. With this, the Aqualand never needs a battery replacement and it can even store a charge that will keep the watch running in complete darkness for up to 60 days. To charge the watch, place the watch face under a light source. Charging with the sun works the quickest, but even a dim basement bulb will do the trick, albeit more slowly.

The Aqualand handles the time portion of the diver's time/depth equation in spades. First, there is the standard watch function of current time—the large hour and minute hand sweep around a dark watch face. Additionally, there is a 24 hour clock and a second hand in smaller, individual dials on the watch face itself. For diving, there is a 50 minute dive chronometer and a smoothly engineered one-way rotating bezel.

For depth monitoring, there is a bright orange hand that sweeps around the dial during a dive, indicating the depth. Around the raised edge of the watch face are depth markings to 125 feet. For dive planning, the Aqualand also has a special feature that recalls the max depth of the most recent dive. This is done by pressing the button nearest the word "call" on the watch face. When pressed, the depth indicator hand will point to the max depth achieved.

When the Aqualand is out of the water, the same orange hand points to one of three levels of the Aqualand's stored power charge. LV.1 or LV.2 denotes the watch is sufficiently charged for safe diving. If the hand points to NG, the charge is too low to activate the depth feature.

All of the watch hands are luminescent for use in low light conditions, as are the hour markings on the watch's face.

For additional diver safety, the depth compensating reinforced rubber strap features the no decompression limits to 125 feet, clearly marked on the inside facing strap.

The Aqualand is water resistant to 600 feet; the buttons and crown should not be used while under the water.

All in all, the Aqualand has a nice combination of features that serve two vital needs for divers and one vital need for society.

The Aqualand sells for \$450. For information on the Eco-Drive Aqualand or any other Citizen watch, call (201) 438-8150.

Photo: Bonnie J. Cardone

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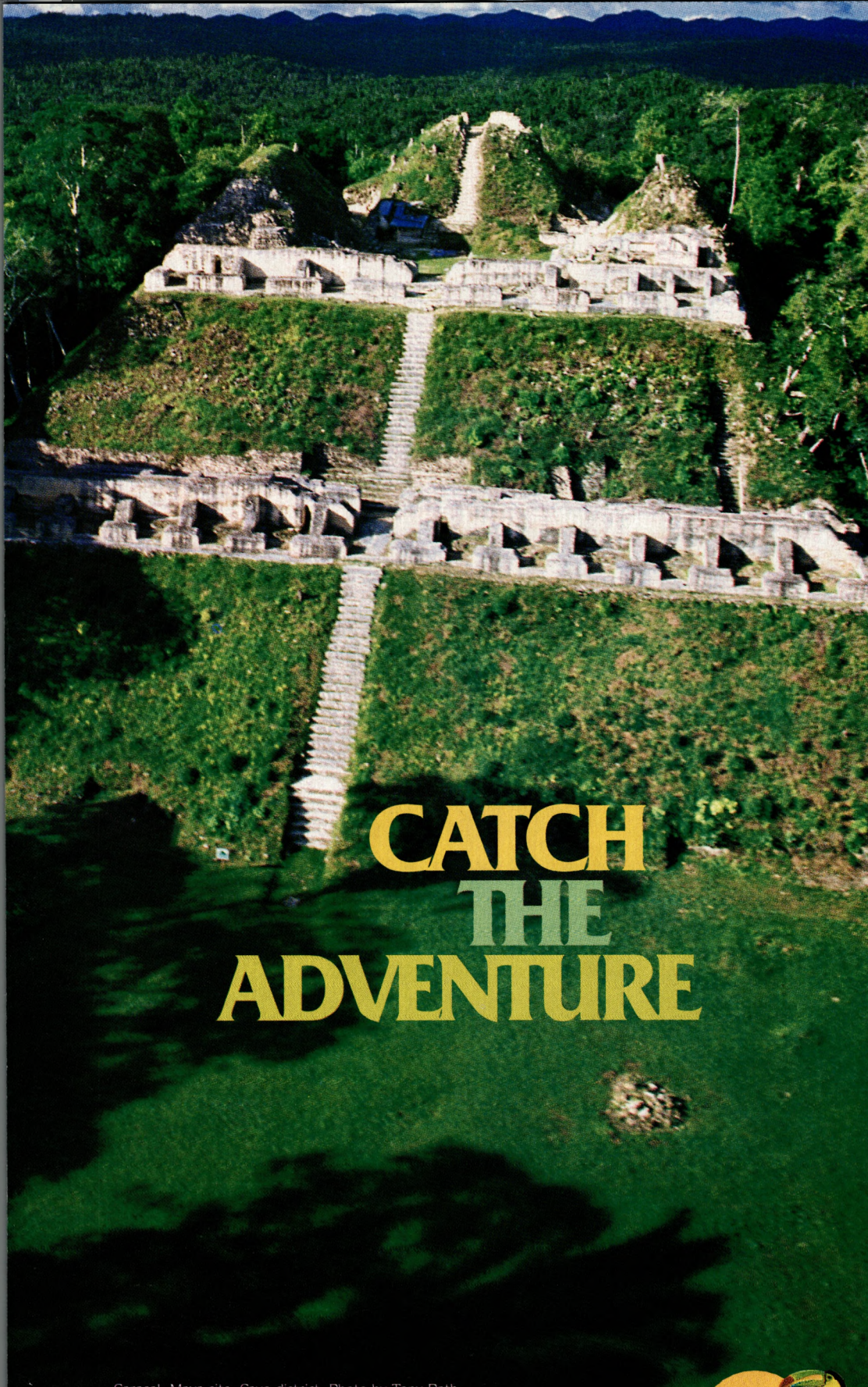
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Caracol, Maya site, Cayo district. Photo by Tony Rath.

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Muck Beauties

O F L E M B E H S T R A I T

Text and Photography by Brandon D. Cole

The freak show is in full swing. Nondescript lumps of algal scuz come to life

as hairy frogfish, awkward bodies totally obscured by weedy skin growths cloaking their predatory presence. Thrusting up through the black sand, slack-jawed snake eels have symbiotic shrimp dancing atop their heads. Having buried all but two of its banded arms in the sand, a mimic octopus puts on a most convincing sea snake act, writhing back and forth in a sinusoidal wave. Then it fools me again, impersonating a giant, menacing crab and next a venomous lionfish. An amorous pair of cockatoo waspfish flops from side to side in the surge. Brilliant mimics in color, shape and movement of the brown leaves scattered about on the bottom, they are all but invisible.

I found more strange, new life forms in one hour of diving than in years of diligent searching planet-wide. And all on a flat, featureless, dirty dive affectionately known as **Hairball**.

Seated among the splendor of Kungkungan Bay Resort's central dining room, I'm half-listening to the mealtime conversation, which ranges from golf to angioplasty. My mind is whirring, wrestling with the question, *Why are so many beasties here in Limbeh Strait?* I'm about to break the ice with just that query when someone turns to Larry Smith—critter hunter extraordinaire and head of dive operations at

KBR—and asks what those “ugly whatsits” were today.

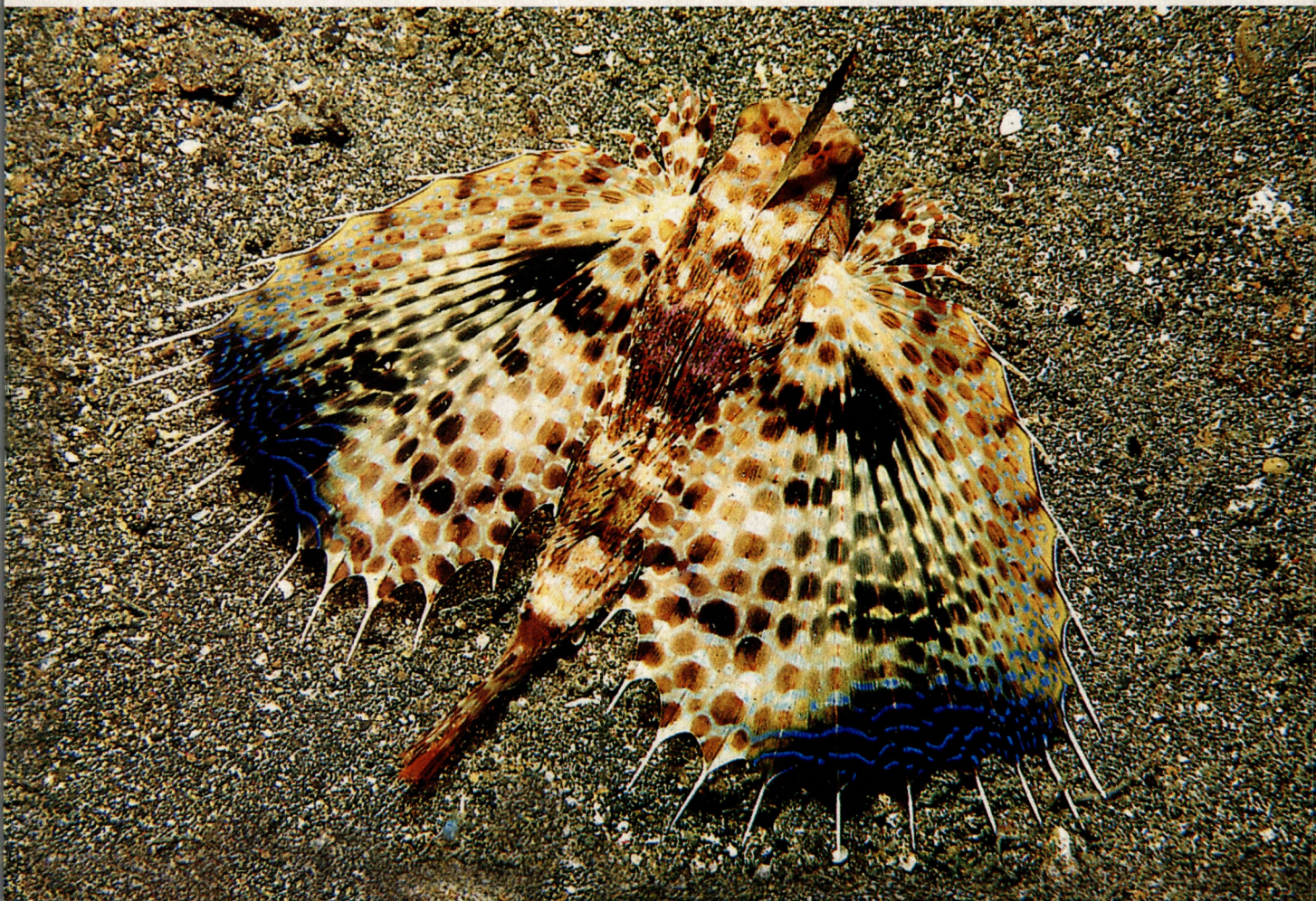
“Hairy frogfish,” responds Larry, beaming with pride. “Or do you mean the hairy Ambon scorpionfish, or the hairy ghost pipefish? We saw them all today. Hairball was really smokin’!”

Cauldron of Creation

Lembeh Strait is a narrow passage on the south side of the northern tip of Sulawesi, Indonesia. Whereas the warm, clear waters and lush coral reefs of the Bunaken Marine Park to the north are world famous and have been explored by divers for decades, the Strait is radically different and relatively unheard of—at least for the moment.

Lembeh's waters are surprisingly cool (about 75°F) and the visibility, averaging 20 to 25 feet, is a far cry from Bunaken. The shallow, current swept area is primarily a soft-bottomed habitat: black volcanic sand slopes, muddy plains, coral rubble piles, etc. Although there are vibrant coral reefs and “typical, tropical fish” in abundance—biologists claim that this region of the Indo-Pacific is the epicenter of marine species diversity—the focus here is truly on this wonderful muck habitat. It's a showcase for

Below: A flying gurnard skims the seafloor looking for unwary prey. **Right:** A cockatoo waspfish, which imitates the motion of seagrass, is all but invisible except to the most diligent searcher.





the lifestyles of the weird and infamous. Among underwater photographers and critter hunters, the area has quickly garnered such catchy titles as “The Twilight Zone” and the “Muck Diving Capital of the World.” In a spectacularly active area of the Pacific Ring of Fire—here nature’s oddities brew and spew forth like an evolutionary highlight film in action—Lembeh Strait is truly a Cauldron of Creation.

Just Mucking Around

Many of the “high-voltage” muck sites are like circus tours from one bizarre attraction to another. Every time I’d hear Larry’s goofy whistle I’d leave something extraordinary—such as a giant sea tiger nudibranch with a symbiotic *Periclimenes* shrimp riding side-saddle—to fly off into the murk to find his dive light pointing at something even more amazing than the last, such as the football-sized frogfish “Old Yeller” repeatedly inhaling butterflyfish appetizers! One grows complacent with the cliché of gorgeous fish—another curious cuttlefish and leaf-fish at **Magic Rock**, for example—glossing right over them in the frenzied hunt for the fingered dragonets and black juvenile sex-changing ribbon eels.

Warning: Venom is Everywhere

Lembeh Strait was recently chosen as the site for a documentary film on venomous marine life. Divers must pay extremely close attention to where one puts hand or knee down. The Twilight Zone is literally crawling with dangerous fishes and invertebrates, many of which make matters

even trickier by blending in perfectly with their surroundings. Flat mud bottoms and rubble fields don’t offer a lot of shelter, so inhabitants use sneaky survival skills such as mimicry, camouflage and venom to protect themselves.

Stonefish—likely the world’s most venomous fish—are everywhere. Larry’s guides once found nine on a single dive at Police Pier. At least a half-dozen species of lionfish bristled venomous spines in my direction every day. There are sea snakes and fire or “toxic” urchins sheltering Coleman’s shrimp, and my personal favorite—the devilfish, known to some as the Caledonian Stinger. When not buried for ambush purposes (leaving only the business tips of its dorsal spines exposed), this dour faced scorpaenid drags its “pin-cushion of stingers” body across the bottom with the aid of finger-like fin spines. When threatened, it flares brightly marked pectoral fins wide—an obvious warning and one to be heeded. Cute and cuddly blue-ringed octopuses possess what might be the world’s most potent natural poison. Divers see them at many sites here, even right under the pier in five feet of water.

Seahorses and Their Kin

A one-half inch seahorse is taking the world by storm. Pygmy seahorses are undeniably cute and captivating, their tiny pot-bellied bodies covered with bumpy, red warts mimicking the polyps of the gorgonian on which they live. Rare and only recently discovered, they have been sighted in only a few places in the Indo-Pacific. No where seems to

hide as many pygmies as the Lembeh Strait area, where up to 25 individuals have been counted clinging to a single seafan. People are flying half way around the world for a look at this diminutive dynamo. Muck madness it is.

At the **Petting Zoo**, Larry led me to a stately six-inch thorny seahorse wandering about a rope sponge garden in 60 feet. Just up the silty slope was a resident pair of banded pipefish snaking back and forth, the male proudly displaying a belly bulging with eggs. At **Nudi Retreat** I saw my first sea moth (aka Pegasus) waddling about the rubble, black proboscis protruding from a stocky, armored body from which sprouted bumble bee-like wings. At famed Hairball I photographed male and female robust ghost pipefish, levitating snout down, tail up, tattered palm fronds washing to and fro for all the world to overlook.

Under the Cover of Darkness

The daytime denizens of Lembeh Strait are weird enough. But when night drops her mantle and Stygian blackness claims the sluggish waters of the Strait, a new cast of characters takes the muck stage. My most disturbing nightmares couldn't have conjured forth a more frightening apparition than the stargazer. With bulbous eyes and twisted-lip smile leering up from under the sand, its grim visage makes a charming picture. Another horror is the elusive bobbitt worm, a voracious predator armed with wicked spines used to hook and grasp its prey while the mandibles shred the victim food processor-style. Side-gilled slugs,



Left top: The hairy frogfish's awkward, weedy growth cloaks it from casual observance. Left bottom: Seagrass ghost pipefish and mate. Top: Juvenile boxfish. Above: A snake eel with its symbiotic shrimp perched protectively on its cheek.

bubble shells and moon snails ooze slowly yet purposefully along in hot pursuit of mates, which they stalk by following a slime trail.

Night dives proved exceptionally productive right off KBR's beach and at nocturnal favorites such as **Aer Praeng** or Nudi Falls. I witnessed octopus and cuttlefish attacking fish and was dive-bombed by frenzied squid. I found a four inch sole, black rimmed in red, which mimics a toxic flatworm. Decorator crabs wore such convincing costumes of sponge, algae and debris I'm certain I overlooked ten for each one recognized. Sponge crabs, mantis shrimp, furry armed "orangutan" crabs and zebra crabs nestled in long-spined sea urchins add to the list of the exotic crustaceans found in the region.

Muck diving. It may not be a PADI specialty course yet, but it certainly is catching on fast. What is it? A compulsion? Delirium? A trendy fad? Maybe all of these, but it's also new, great fun, and for the critter hunter and/or photographer, tremendously rewarding. It doesn't appeal to everyone, but if "one beautiful coral reef begins to look like any other," the time could be ripe for a change. Time to dive somewhere that doesn't look like it holds anything at all—a mud pit. 🐠



For the last seven years I have been making the short three hour flight out of Los Angeles to explore the riches of the Sea of Cortez and Baja, California. I have made this trip every year without fail to see the abundant marine life available in the Sea of Cortez. The possibilities of encountering schooling hammerhead sharks, whale sharks,

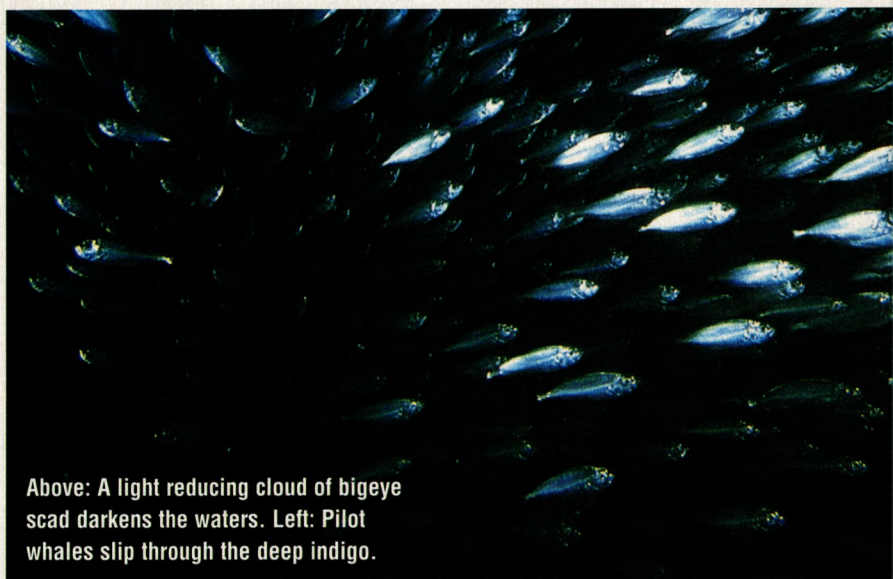
Bigger and Badder in baja

the complete diver's guide

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY JAMES FORTE

manta rays, dolphins, sea lions, and the thousands of colorful reef fish that live here keep me coming back for more. This particular trip, however, would be one of my best yet. I was asked to find and interview the local divemasters, who dive day in and day out in this spectacular region. I had already befriended many divemasters from my previous trips and heard some great stories, but this time I'd find out which dive sites were their favorites, and get their best sea stories for a true insider's guide to Baja.

A giant Pacific manta soars beneath a group of snorkelers who are about to experience one of Baja's ultimate big creature encounters.



Above: A light reducing cloud of bigeye scad darkens the waters. Left: Pilot whales slip through the deep indigo.

La Paz Divemasters

Nelson Cota, Javier Mora & Ricardo Fifield of the Cortez Club: These three have been diving for eight years and have worked around Baja as divemasters. When asked for their best sea story, they simultaneously answered, "schooling hammerheads."

Nelson's favorite dive site for these sharks is **Isla Las Animas**, an island and group of pinnacles north of La Paz. Diving off the main island starts at the surface and continues down to 120 feet or more. Near the surface, balloonfish, damselfish, moorish idols and sea turtles can be spotted. Diving with the hammerheads is not for the beginning diver as they are often found at depths from 100 to 150 feet.

Javier prefers **Isla Los Islotes**, a California sea lion rookery. Off the west end in the deeper water, you can find schools of barracuda and sardines and on occasion large groups of mobula rays or hammerheads.

Ricardo, who ended up as my divemaster on this trip, prefers searching the **El Bajo** sea mounts for sharks. "Here," he said, "you can just sit on the bottom (95 feet) of the north mount and look up for sharks, billfish, schooling jacks and tuna that are sure to pass by."

Enrique Castillo of Scubaja: Enrique is the managing director and head dive-master for Scubaja, one of the newest operators in La Paz. He has been working in the La Paz area for ten years and decided two years ago that he would create Scubaja. Enrique said the wall dive at **La Reinita** is his favorite. Starting at about 45 feet, the wall is covered with seafans, cup corals and schools of colorful reef fish. You can continue along the wall or descend and look for schooling hammerheads and other large pelagics that may swim by.

Alfredo Barroso of Baja Expeditions: Alfredo was born and raised in Cuba where he learned to dive. After watching Howard Hall's film *Shadows in a Desert Sea*, Alfredo wanted to see hammerheads, and so he moved to La Paz in 1994. Alfredo's two favorite dive sites are the El Bajo seamounts and the wreck of the *Salvatierra*. In five years of diving at El Bajo and the surrounding area, Alfredo has filmed sperm whales, orcas, false killer whales, pilot whales, dolphins, marlin, whale sharks, mantas, and, of course, hammerhead sharks. On the *Salvatierra*, there is an amazing abundance of fish and invertebrate life as well as gardens of black coral.

Adria Rocio Lozano of Baja Quest: Rocio learned to dive in 1986 while learning oceanography. In 1991, she moved to La Paz to lead adventure travel trips in the Sea of Cortez. She has three experiences that she puts at the top of her list. At Isla Las Animas, seven hammerhead sharks circled 20 feet from her and three other divers for half an hour. At another time, a friendly manta played with her for 40 minutes at **Isla San Benedicto**. Recently, 12 whale sharks gathered to feed in a 200 square yard area near La Paz.



Happy to be part of it all—the divemasters of Baja.

East Cape Divemasters

Mark & Jennifer Rayer of Vista Sea Sport: A husband and wife team, Mark and Jennifer moved to Buena Vista eight years ago for retirement. After diving in the rich, beautiful waters of his new home, Mark decided to go back to the states, upgrade his divemaster rating to instructor and purchase enough dive gear to start Vista Sea Sport. Jennifer also became an instructor and partner in the business.

Cabo Pulmo Marine Reserve is the highlight of East Cape and the only live hard coral reef system off North America's west coast. Mark picked **El Bajo de Los Morros**, a drift dive and part of the reserve, as his favorite dive. This half mile expanse of hard corals has the best visibility in the area. Mark recalled an experience at the end of a guided tour when they heard porpoises and then watched them play around the divers.

Jennifer told us of **Punta Perico**, an advanced diving area with large boulders at 65 to 70 feet that form monument-like rock formations with large swim-throughs and loads of reef fish.

Cota Trasvina of Vista Sea Sport: Trasvina, known as "Chuy" by all the locals, was our captain the day we dived with Vista Sea Sport. Chuy started operating boats as a captain and fisherman at age 13. Now 33, he is using 20 years of local reef knowledge to put divers on the best sites possible.

El Bajo is his favorite dive site. He has fished it his entire life and has now found it to be an even better as a place for diving. One day, as he was looking around the blue waters

during a safety stop, a large whale shark swam up to him and waited for him to finish his stop before moving on.

Raphael Peyras of Vista Sea Sport: Raphael is a French diving instructor making his way around the seas to learn the names and habits of as many fish as possible. In the year Raphael has spent in Baja, he has logged more than 200 dives. He came to the Sea of Cortez in search of the large pelagics that frequent **Gorda Banks**, the home of "Señor Big." Up to 100 schooling hammerhead sharks can be found here, as well as dorado, marlin and sailfish, and humpback whales in the winter months.

Cabo San Lucas Divemasters

Hector Peredo Aquirre of Pacific Coast Divers: Hector's 11 year diving career started in the Gulf of Mexico, where he spent three years as a commercial diver. He moved to Cabo San Lucas to work as a divemaster.

Like many of the divemasters in the area, when asked his favorite dive site, Gorda Banks took first place. Hector's favorite dive at this site was on Mother's Day. The sea conditions that



An exuberant California sea lion caught in a playful moment at Los Islotes.

day were calm and incredibly clear. Just as they got down a short distance, a school of hundreds of hammerheads surrounded him and the other divers. After returning to the boat from the first dive, he went in for a snorkel, something he rarely does. Just after he entered the water, a 35 foot

whale shark swam up and stayed around long enough for all the divers to hop in and enjoy. The day we dived Gorda Banks with Hector and Pacific Coast Divers we experienced a large school of hammerheads ourselves.

Jorge Shulz Harp of J&R Divers: Jorge had the most years in diving of anyone we interviewed: 28 years as a diver, 14 years as a divemaster/instructor and 10 years as owner/operator of J&R Divers.

He told us a little about the local diving. "...[many] Pacific fish species can be found in the Sea of Cortez, often in large schools." This abundance of marine life is in large part due to the plankton rich waters. Sometimes, however, the masses of life-giving plankton can change dramatically. The east side of **Blow Hole** is his favorite dive site. "Here you can run into turtles, schooling big eye jacks, groupers, and large Pacific mantas. I also really like blue water diving off our deeper pinnacles in the winter

months for humpback whales."

Devore Sherman and Victor Arriaga of Baja Dive: Tired of the busy city life in Los Angeles, Devore moved to Baja in 1983. In 1987, he moved to Cabo to work as a divemaster with the local operators. Devore is now the head divemaster and a part-

and living in Cabo for 19 years. He chose **The Point** and **The Shipwreck at Lands End** as his favorites. Both can be visited on the same tank of air and both are loaded with schooling bait fish, California sea lions, moray eels and, on this particular trip, a large school of skip jack tuna feeding on bait fish.

"Here I am diving at the Blow Hole and I hear the humpbacks singing behind me out in the blue."

ner in Baja Dive. His favorite site is **Cabo Pulmo**. "It's simple," he said, "You have the coral reef, lots of fish, mantas, whale sharks, warm water, and decent visibility year-round."

Another Baja Dive employee, Victor Arriaga was the oldest divemaster we met in Cabo. Victor has been diving

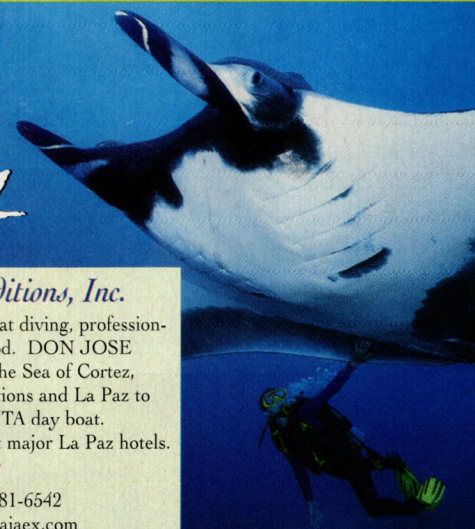
Dustin Lohrman and Donna Juday of Underwater Diversions: Owner and operator of Underwater Diversions, Dustin moved to Cabo San Lucas to open his business six years ago. Dustin has been an instructor for seven years and has been diving since he was 13. He is now 25. Dustin now has three boats and specializes in diving his favorite dive site, Gorda Banks.

Donna Juday had been diving for two years when she decided to move to Cabo from Phoenix, Arizona. Donna picked her favorite dive site and experience with ease. She said, "Here I am diving at the Blow Hole and I hear the humpbacks singing behind me out in the blue water. As I turn around to hear them better, I see that a pair are swimming by me. I'm sure you can imagine the shock and joy I felt that day."

Antonio Luevanos Godinez of Amigos Del Mar: Antonio has 20 years of experience, many as a commercial diver and instructor. Having been in Cabo for the last 15 years, Antonio had more than his fair share of stories. His favorite dive site is the canyon that was once visited and made famous by the late Jacques-Yves Cousteau. **Sand Falls** is a small portion of a long wall that goes from the Arch, back in to the bay and ending at Pelican Rock. Large seafans, schools of fish, manta rays, eagle rays, and sharks are often spotted here. Antonio recalled sitting at a safety stop near the

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B A J A

Arch end of the wall when a giant Pacific manta appeared and stayed around until being moved out by a whale shark who was also curious about the divers.

Scott Sunddy of the M/V Solmar V: Scott is probably the most well known divemaster in Cabo and is referred to by all who know him as "Scott Ray." He has been diving for 12 years. Scott spent 260 days last year on the live-aboard dive boat *Solmar V*. He has identified and helped educate others in identifying more than 117 giant Pacific mantas.

The *Solmar V* specializes in live-aboard dive trips to the Islas Revillagigedos. The four islands, **Isla San Benedicto, Isla Socorro, Isla Roca Partida, and Isla Clarion**, lie 250 miles south of Cabo San Lucas. Scott told me of his favorite dive site and dives. "...Isla Roca Partida...has to be my favorite. I know of eight species of sharks that live here. I have counted seven species of sharks at one time during a dive. I have seen the rare porbeagle shark as well. Another time I had 50 dolphins swim by, including a rare albino..." Scott also mentioned that for those looking for mantas, **The Boiler** at Isla San Benedicto is pretty much a guarantee.

Axel Witteveen of Tio Sports: Axel is a Belgian who made his way to Cabo San Lucas. His favorite dive site is **Land's End**. "There is so much diversity—lobsters, rays, turtles, and schooling fish. The energy in the water is awesome. There is also a fishing boat wreck that has seafans and gorgonians that are magnificent..."

John Fox of Cabo Aquadeportes: John's parents, John and Molly Fox, started one of the first diving operations in Cabo and became the first NAUI Pro facility. Today, John Jr. is running the family business. John's favorite site is deep under Pelican Rock, a wall that is seldom dived due to its depth. Pelagics, schooling fish, seafans and the unknown are easily found here. He calls this dive **The Church**. He feels as though you can be touched by God when diving along his favorite wall. 🐠

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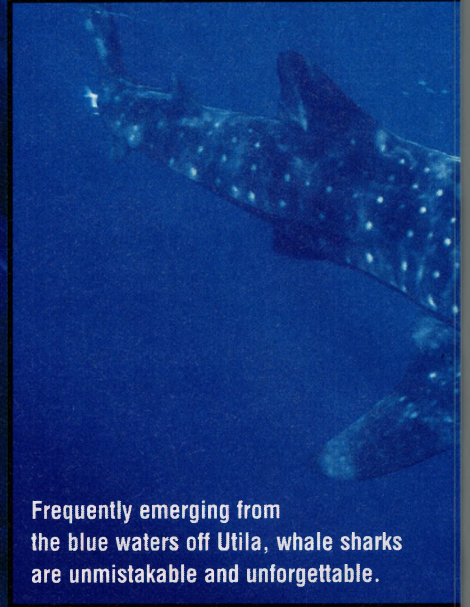
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Day Tripping

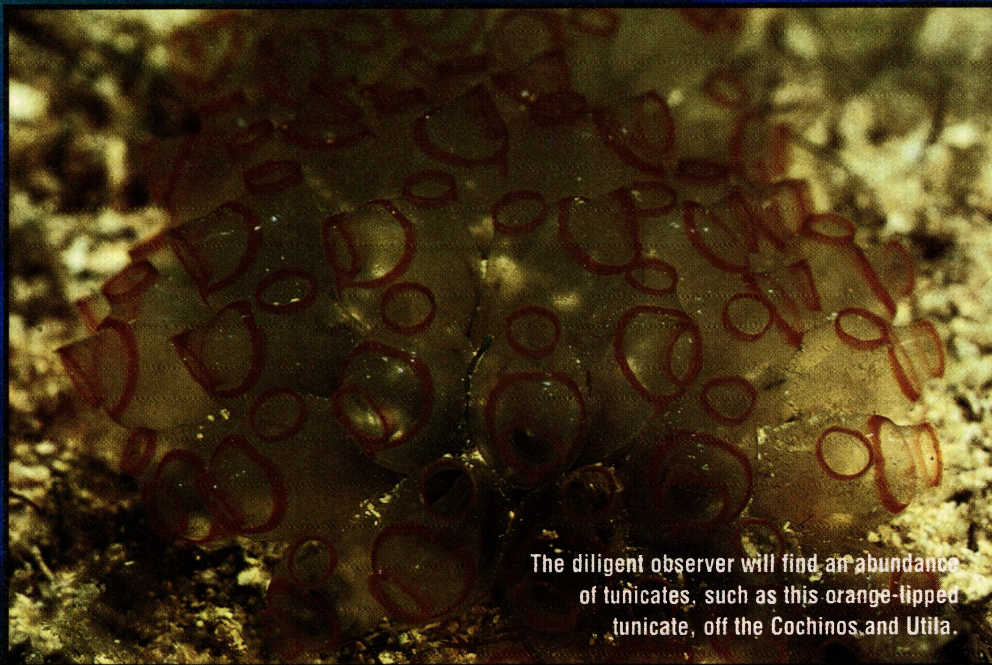


A dolphin dive off Anthony's Key gives divers a thrilling and up close encounter.



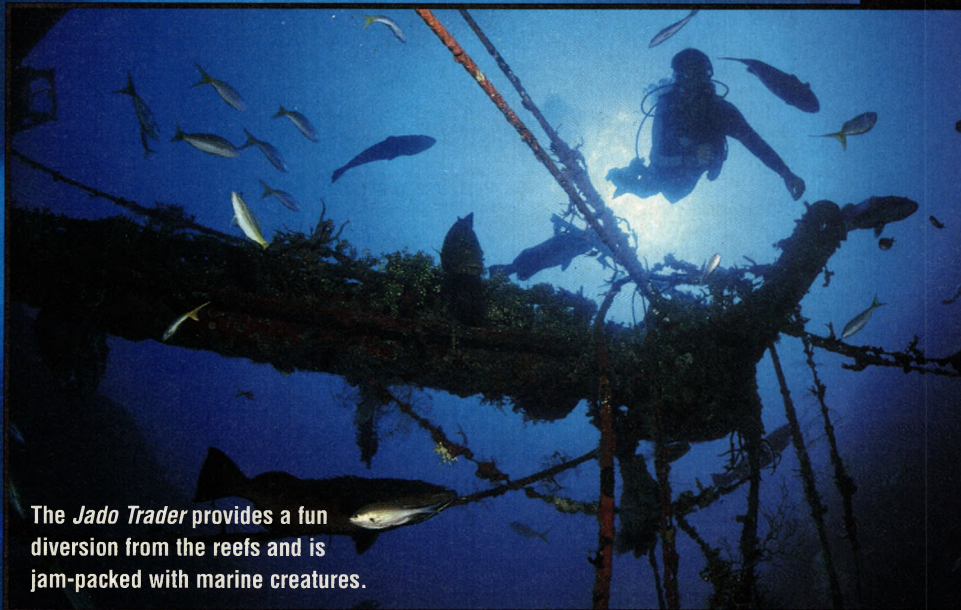
Frequently emerging from the blue waters off Utila, whale sharks are unmistakable and unforgettable.

We follow in the wake of creatures large and small



The diligent observer will find an abundance of tunicates, such as this orange-tipped tunicate, off the Cochinis and Utila.

the Bay Islands



The *Jado Trader* provides a fun diversion from the reefs and is jam-packed with marine creatures.

on singular adventures in a sea of biodiversity.

We left the resort dock early and for the next hour and 20 minutes I was almost lulled back to sleep by the hum of the triple jet drives. Behind us the lush hilly spine of Roatan began to shrink on the horizon. The bow of our dive boat was pointed toward a group of tiny islands—the Cochinos or Hog Islands, so called because the English pirates of the 17th century stocked them with hogs for fresh meat.

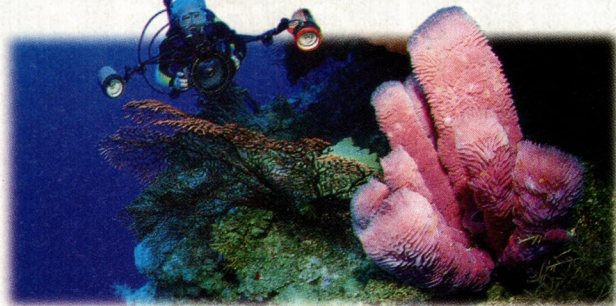
Today there are no hogs and very few people. The reefs surrounding this stunningly beautiful archipelago produce an amazing assortment of the most unique and unusual marine life in the Caribbean; the potential for macrophotography here is amazing.

Getting to really know the diving in the Bay Islands is what frequent day trips are all about. Anthony's Key Resort can visit a selection of great dive destinations, extending their range to include—in addition to Roatan and the Cochinos group—the islands of Utila, Barbareta, and even Guanaja.

The Bay Islands of Honduras consist of three major islands, three smaller islands and approximately 60 tiny keys. Closer to the Central American mainland, and officially separate from the Bay islands, is the ring-shaped cluster of the Cochinos. At first glance, the diving here is typically Caribbean, but with more time and a closer look, its uniqueness and individuality appear.

The main string of islands, which includes Utila, Roatan and Guanaja and the smaller islets of Helene, Morat and Barbareta, are the exposed spine of an underwater mountain range. Off one side of these

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islands is the Bartlett Trench, which at thousands of feet deep is one of the deepest basins in the entire Caribbean. This makes for steep, nearshore reefs, mountainous coral pinnacles, and extensive wall diving. The drop-off often begins in only 25 feet of water on both sides of the islands. However, Utila and the Cochinis Islands are on the continental shelf where seamounts are formed. From one island to the next, there is more individuality and difference in the diving than you might expect.

The single underwater theme that weaves its way through all the Bay Islands is biodiversity. Here can be found 64 of the 65 stony coral species known throughout the Caribbean. There are more different sizes and types of sponges than elsewhere in the Caribbean. Common to most Bay Island reefs are groupers and rock-hinds, stands of pillar corals, deep clefts and canyons between monstrous coral heads, and black coral. Special to these reefs are huge coral crabs, white cup sponges and yellow-orange and white fuzzy soft corals.

Our trip to Cochinis added a unique creature to my list of special photo subjects. Between Cochinis Grande and Cochinis Pequeno is a nearly continuous shallow shelf where several moorings have been installed. Along this shelf we first found several sailback blennies who raised their oversized dorsal fins periodically in full display. Next we found several different nudibranchs, one no more than one-half inch long, which none of us could identify. Everywhere along the shelf were grape-like clusters of purple tunicates, common to Cochinis and Utila. If you are a tunicate freak and look diligently, you will find at least four species, including bluebell, pink-lipped and orange-lipped varieties. On the way back to the boat we found an octopus crawling along the reef in the daylight.

The general visibility in the Cochinis Islands is good but not spectacular. However, since the reasons for diving here are almost totally related to marine life, sightseeing

Anthony's Key Resort

Anthony's Key Resort is on Roatan's northwest shore. For the first time in AKR's 28 year history, the resort was closed for several months recently for renovations in the wake of Hurricane Mitch. Sixteen bungalows on the key have been completely replaced and are air-conditioned. Now there is also more beach area on the lagoon side of the key.

AKR's dive operation includes air and nitrox fills, an hyperbaric chamber complex, a complete instructional program and facility, and a photo/video shop, all on the main island dock. Professional instructors offer training all the way through to Instructor Development Courses.

An ancillary operation to AKR is the Dolphin Encounter program, part of the educational offerings created and administrated by the Roatan Institute for Marine Sciences. At the eastern end of the resort property and on Bailey's Key, RIMS features a dry lab, wet lab, dolphin areas, and the Roatan Museum. Four different dolphin programs are offered: the Dolphin Swim, Dolphin Dive, a Dolphin Camp for youngsters, and a Dolphin Specialty Course for adults.

Standard trips are serviced by a fleet of 42 to 44 foot island-built custom dive boats. The optional specialty dives are hosted aboard a new fleet of custom built Pro 48 triple jet drive vessels.

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and photography is close to the reef. Paul Humann's fish and invertebrate I.D. books have more than a few photos from the Cochinis Islands.

On another occasion we opted for the special day trip to Utila. The northern reefs are precipitous and similar to Roatan while the southern reefs, on the shelf and close to the island, are

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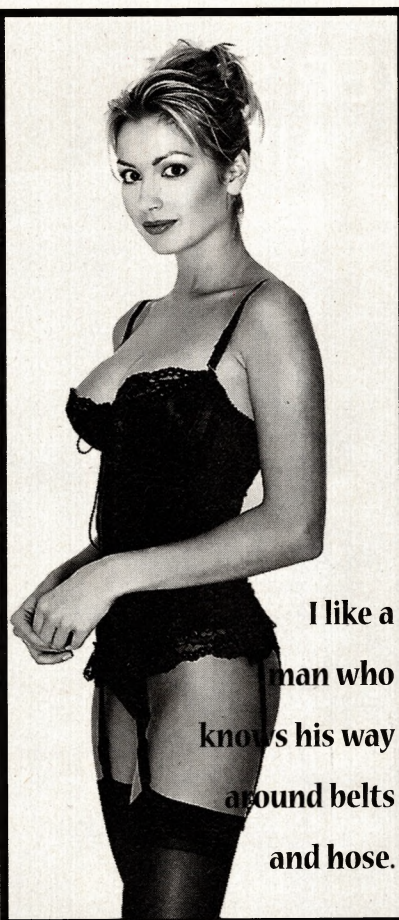
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bank reefs and pinnacles.

Once, in Utila, I was fortunate to photograph an odd-looking bottom dwelling fish called the northern stargazer. According to the fish books, this species is not found south of Palm Beach, Florida. I have never found another example in the Bay Islands, but at least one stargazer never read the book. Another special find on the shallow bank reefs of Utila are sea-horses of two colorations, mottled brown-black and orange-brown. Again, unless you know just where to look, they will have to be located by your divemaster.

Size runs the gamut in Utila, which is fast becoming known as the "whale shark capital of the Caribbean." There are no guarantees, of course; after three visits to Utila, we sighted three whale sharks during a single day. There is a specific technique for finding them on a clear and calm day, and snorkeling is the only way to keep up with them for an unforgettable experience or photograph.

The diving around Barbareta is another specialty excursion. Barbareta features some of the prettiest underwater scenery in the Bay Islands. Along the Barbareta Wall are some of the largest barrel sponges I have ever seen. Dives along this wall often produce encounters with big schools of jacks, chubs and spadefish.

Another specialty day trip undertaken by AKR is to Guanaja for sites and subjects such as the distinctive Black Rock Canyons and the *Jado Trader*, the largest shipwreck in the Bay Islands, and a variety of interesting sites toward the east end of Roatan. This latter trip is quite spectacular and not far from the resort. A special dive site is Dolphin's Den, which provides a maze of swim-throughs from the inside to the outside of the main reef.

A slide program is offered each week at Anthony's Key on the great variety of subject matter found on standard and specialty dive sites visited from the resort. Now, there is more to be seen and experienced in the Bay Islands than ever before. 

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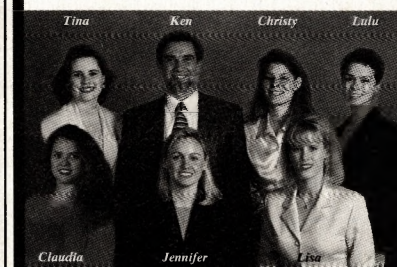
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16 totally new bungalows now encircle the key! All additional bungalows on the key and those hillside on the main island have been totally renovated.



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New bungalows feature more spacious interiors, mahogany furnishings and handsome island-inspired decors. You have been asking for it, and now you have it: 16 bungalows are now air-conditioned, weather-sealed and fitted with high-visibility glass windows!

Come see the new Anthony's Key



The Roatan Institute of Marine Sciences is fully operational including Dolphin Dive, Dolphin Snorkel and Dolphin Presentation Programs as well as the popular Dolphin Kids Program and the Dolphin Specialty Course for adults.

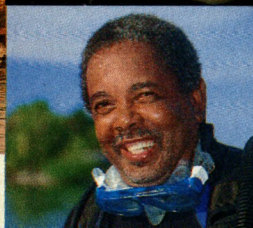


AKR now features one of the most modern and complete dive boat fleets in the Caribbean: In addition to six 42' island built custom dive boats used for standard dive operations, there are four new 48' custom dive flagships scheduled for specialty excursions.

The dive operation also features Nitrox and a Continuing Educational Program that offers Resort Courses through IDC training!



The water is clear, the reefs are relatively unscathed and the island foliage is again green and luxuriant.



One thing hasn't changed - you will find the same smiling faces that have brought many visitors back year after year!



The key layout has now been redesigned to provide expanded beach areas located on both sides of the boat dock. Key bungalows face the tradewinds, open ocean or sunset.



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Given a choice, many hard-core divers would stay in the water until their bodies wrinkle like brain coral. So the peer pressure to cram in as many dives as your computer will allow can seem overwhelming, especially in the Bay Islands, where the healthy reefs are lush and diverse. But there's an exciting mainland world just within sight - Central America at its most vibrant. So if you are embarrassed to admit that your interests extend beyond inner space, here are a few excuses for sneaking off (*on a 20 minute, low altitude flight*) to the mainland for some eye-popping "decompression" days.

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"We were granted an audience with the King of the Maya World."

"We did it for religious reasons."



"We wanted to see if there is life above water."

"There's a party on the mainland."





a friend's first

Text and Photography by James Forte

*C*osta Rica is the kind of place where everyone can have a good time, even those who don't dive.

Volcanic mountain ranges are covered in lush rain forests that stretch down to white sand

beaches on two seas. The rain forests are filled with rare birds, butterflies, frogs and other exotic animals you can observe.

There are many outdoor activities to

choose from that can satisfy even the most ardent adventurer. However, if you want to try scuba diving on your vacation as well, this is the place.



A white face monkey.



Filefish.



New diver, John Von Passenheim, and his instructor explore the reef.

Shades of blue and green effortlessly meld in a place so chock

dive in costa rica



My latest diving safari led me and three friends to a terrific area known as Golfo De Papagayo. There we chose to rent a couple of 4WD trucks to drive to Playa Hermosa. Playa Hermosa is centrally located and surrounded by neighboring cities providing lots of options for entertainment, outdoor activities and, of course, excellent diving. Once settled, we arranged to dive with several local dive operators over the next week. On this trip, two of my traveling companions were divers and a third was not. John, the non-diver in the group, had always been curious about scuba diving but had never pursued it. With some gentle prodding, John agreed to give scuba diving a try.

We took John to Bill Beard's Diving Safaris where we met with Andrea, an instructor who has travelled and taught for several years. There he enrolled in an

introductory scuba experience course. The intro is a condensed scuba course where equipment use and safety are taught in a pool in the morning, followed by open ocean diving in the afternoon.

That morning we went diving at two local sites while John learned how to scuba dive back at the hotel. We came in from our morning dives to pick up Andrea and John who would be joining us for the afternoon dives. For John's first ocean dive, Andrea picked **Los Meros**, "a shallow dive that has it all," she said. We anchored off a shallow mound of rocks that started not far below the surface and bottomed out at 40 feet on a sand bed. We donned our gear and hopped overboard, anxious to see the marine life and our friend's first scuba dive. John was a little apprehensive at first. He wasn't sure about trusting his tank and regulator to supply him with air



Left: A jewel moray peeks out from its hiding place. Right: Parrotfish are a common sighting.

full of adventure that one can slip beneath the waves...



in this new environment. He got a little winded from trying to hold on to a little of his last breath of air before taking a new one. Then John realized that he only needed to relax a little and he too could swim freely through the water like the rest of us. It didn't take long before he relaxed and enjoyed the richness and beauty of the reefs we visited. After one day of diving, John announced that he would continue his dive training and get his open water certification when he returned.

The following days of our trip were spent exploring our surroundings. I managed to get a dive trip out to **Catalina Island**, one of the more desirable dive areas in the area. Huge schools of fish, manta rays, eagle rays and reef sharks are but a few of the highlights of diving here. We heard good things about **Bat Island**, but were unable to make it there. Reaching either island is weather dependent and costs a few extra dollars because the boat rides are twice as far as those to the local dive sites. On the day I spent at Catalina Island, the other travelers drove down the coast a short distance to Tamarindo, a laid-back fishing village that is well known for its surf. Tamarindo's river mouth breaks,

beach breaks and reef breaks provide new and seasoned surfers with consistent waves year-round.

It didn't take long for us to realize that we would not be able to enjoy all of Costa Rica's adventures and we started planning our return to Costa Rica. My short list for the next trip down would include a visit to the Arenal volcano, river rafting and a trip to **Coco Island**, Costa Rica's premier dive destination. For the more adventurous travelers, a canopy trip should not be missed. Imagine a bird's eye view of Costa Rica's rain forest. Special platforms and ropes combined with traditional rock climbing equipment allow for safe travel from treetop to treetop.

Getting to Costa Rica is made simple by flights from several U.S. cities. Continental and LACSA airlines are two of the more popular carriers that have flights into Costa Rica's capital city of San Jose. From San Jose you have your choice of driving to the Caribbean coast or the Pacific coast for scuba diving and snorkeling. If you're not into diving, you

*We donned our gear and
hopped overboard,
anxious to see our
friend's first scuba dive.*

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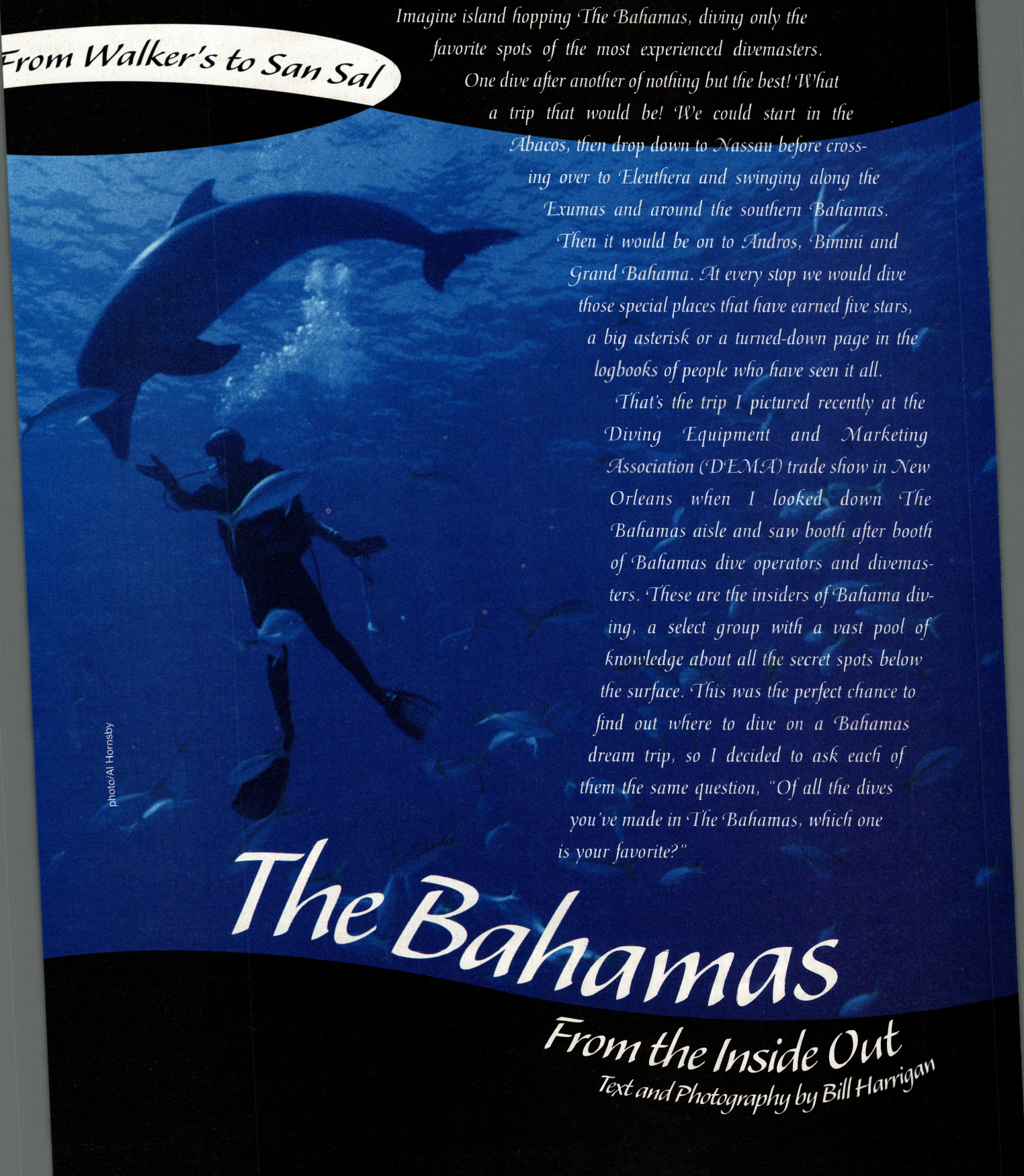
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can head out to one of many other fascinating areas in Costa Rica for a different kind of adventure. Either way, Costa Rica won't leave you disappointed. 🐠

*amid clouds of reef fish in the morning, and spend the
afternoon flushing butterflies from their treetop hideouts.*

A diver in a wetsuit and fins is swimming underwater, looking up at a large, dark fish, possibly a shark, that is swimming above them. The water is a deep blue, and there are some bubbles around the diver. The overall scene is serene and captures a moment of marine life.

From Walker's to San Sal

Imagine island hopping The Bahamas, diving only the favorite spots of the most experienced divemasters.

One dive after another of nothing but the best! What a trip that would be! We could start in the Abacos, then drop down to Nassau before crossing over to Eleuthera and swinging along the Exumas and around the southern Bahamas. Then it would be on to Andros, Bimini and Grand Bahama. At every stop we would dive those special places that have earned five stars, a big asterisk or a turned-down page in the logbooks of people who have seen it all.

That's the trip I pictured recently at the Diving Equipment and Marketing Association (DEMA) trade show in New Orleans when I looked down The Bahamas aisle and saw booth after booth of Bahamas dive operators and divemasters. These are the insiders of Bahama diving, a select group with a vast pool of knowledge about all the secret spots below the surface. This was the perfect chance to find out where to dive on a Bahamas dream trip, so I decided to ask each of them the same question, "Of all the dives you've made in The Bahamas, which one is your favorite?"

photo/Al Hornsby

The Bahamas

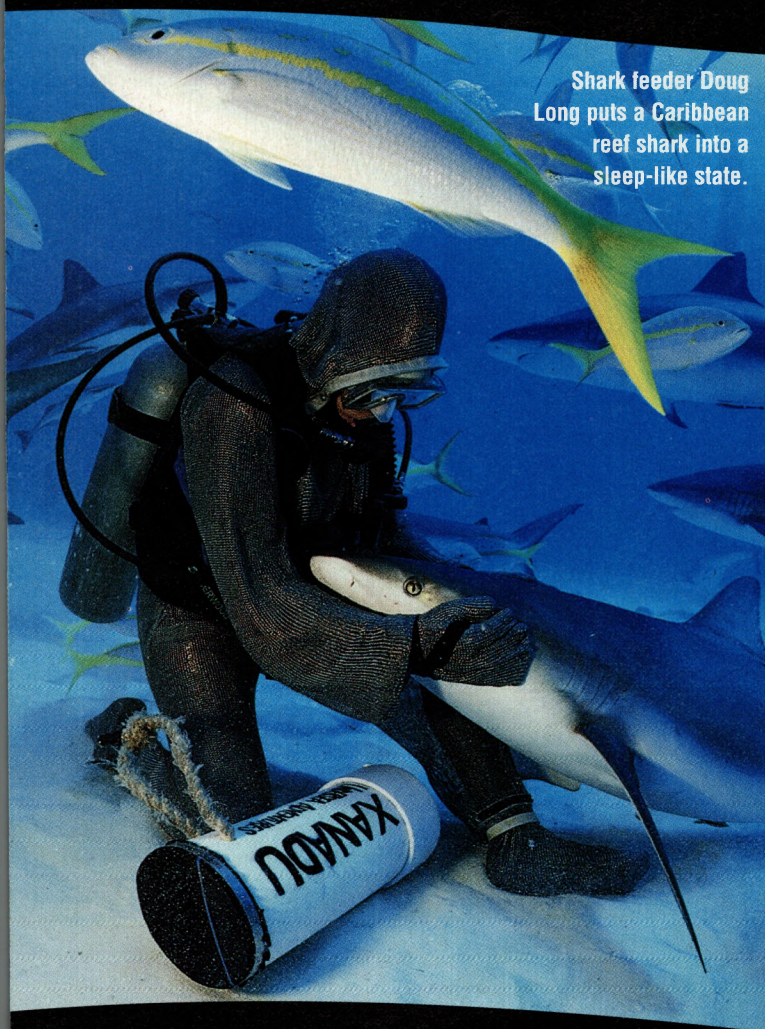
From the Inside Out
Text and Photography by Bill Harrigan

Purely to give our trip a logical itinerary, I started in the northern Bahamas, at the western edge of the Abacos, and traveled in a clockwise circle, ending up at Grand Bahama. This put Walker's Cay in the lead off position, so I headed for Barry Albury, the assistant manager at Walker's Cay Undersea Adventures.

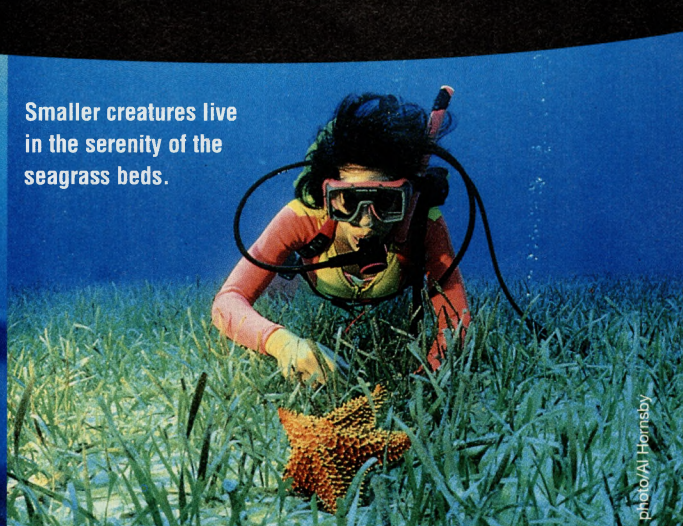
"My favorite," Barry said, "is definitely **Shark Rodeo**, held at a site we call **Spiral Cavern**. We've been doing Rodeo at Walker's since 1979 and the dive just keeps getting better. We...gradually developed the current 'chumsicle.' This frozen treat keeps the sharks real happy without get-

ting them too excited. Divers swim freely about during the dive; this lets everyone have a good look....after the Rodeo you have a great bond with sharks, a feeling of respect..."

Continuing to the east, we come to Marsh Harbor on Great



Shark feeder Doug Long puts a Caribbean reef shark into a sleep-like state.



Smaller creatures live in the serenity of the seagrass beds.



A brittlestar clings to a coral reef.

ting them too excited. Divers swim freely about during the dive; this lets everyone have a good look....after the Rodeo you have a great bond with sharks, a feeling of respect..."

About 60 miles east of Walker's Cay, we come to Green Turtle Cay, home to some of the friendliest people you'll ever meet. One of them is Brendal Stevens, owner of Brendal's Dive Shop International.

"My favorite," Brendal told me, "is a dive called **Coral Caverns**. It's like an underwater Grand Canyon. The dive starts right at the surface among the elkhorn corals and

Abaco, where Keith Rodgers owns and operates Dive Abaco.

Keith's favorite dive is a dramatic spot called **The Towers**. "It's a collection of four broad pinnacles," he told me, "that rise up from the sand bottom at 60 feet to within 20 feet of the surface....A pair of pet groupers always greets us early in the dive and escorts us the rest of the way around the reef. In the summer, the caves are packed so full of silver-sides that it's like swimming through some kind of living silver soup. All year long we see spotted eagle rays and sea turtles. Caribbean reef sharks are usually around too, since

we have a feeding station not too far away.”

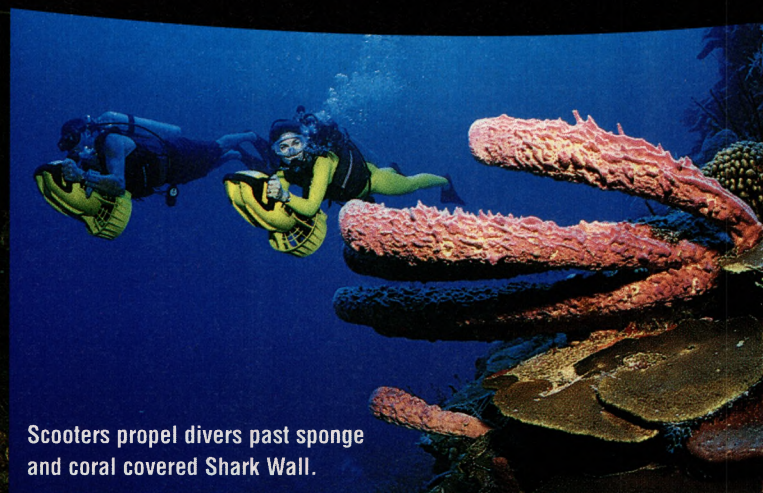
Ricardo Davis, a boat captain and divemaster at the Abaco Beach Dive Center also on Great Abaco, grew up in Marsh Harbour.

Ricardo’s favorite is the wreck of the *Deborah K.*, a 160 foot freighter sunk as an artificial reef in July 1997. The ship sits upright in about 120 feet of water with two masts extending upward to within 30 feet of the surface. “Photographers love this dive,” said Ricardo, “because the visibility is usually 75 to 100 feet and the current is rarely difficult. There are enough corals and sponges starting to grow on the hull to give it some

“I dived the **Lost Blue Hole** for the first time around 1982,” Leroy said, “and it has always been my favorite. There is a special magic to the place, maybe because it is so different from any other dive. You just never know what you’re going to see inside....The top of the hole is at 35 feet, surrounded by sand dotted with numerous coral heads. Stingrays can always be found sleeping in the sand or searching for food.... The hole itself is more than 200 feet in diameter and 200 feet deep. A series of ledges start around 60 feet down and at 70 feet there are some interesting caves that extend back 25 or 30 feet into the wall. Sharks seem to



Divers peer into the pilot house of Theo's Wreck off Grand Bahama.



Scooters propel divers past sponge and coral covered Shark Wall.



Snorkelers enjoy Bimini's calm, crystalline water.

color, but it still has a ghostly appearance that looks great in photos. The entire superstructure is intact, and there is easy access to the wheelhouse and crew quarters. The big propeller, which is missing one blade, is still attached to the ship, hanging clear of the bottom between the hull and rudder.”

Our next stop is Nassau’s Bahama Divers, in the heart of town, just across from Paradise Island. Abaco born Leroy Lowe joined Bahama Divers in 1978 and spent the next 12 years running boats and making three dives a day before becoming the managing director.

be attracted to Lost Blue Hole, and several species may turn up on any particular day.”

On the other side of New Providence we meet a dive instructor from the other side of the world, Junko Yamaguchi of Stuart Cove’s Dive South Ocean. Her favorite is **Shark Wall**.

“The clear blue water really gives you the feeling of flying here,” June told me, “and the wall is filled with color. It’s a lively, dynamic place with bold purple tube sponges, bright green sponges, swaying soft corals and mounds of beautiful star

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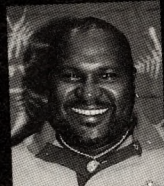
and brain corals. Tiger and nassau groupers will swim right up to you.... And, of course, there are the sharks. They are fed not far from here, so we always find them cruising the wall...."

Bahamian born Derek Tozer grew up in England but returned to the islands 12 years ago to pursue a career as an instructor and shark feeder at Nassau Scuba Centre.

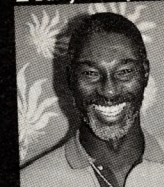
"My favorite is the **Shark Suit Adventure**," Derek said. "This is a two-tank dive we started two years ago....The first dive is a training dive, to get accustomed to the [chain mail shark] suit. On the second dive, the diver gets to feed the sharks with a pole spear and assist me while I hand feed them. I love to see the initial fear and uncertainty people feel...give way to exhilaration....There's no other way to get so close and to interact with so many sharks."

From Nassau we head northeast to meet Richard Rowe of Valentine's Dive Center on Harbour Island.

Richard's all time favorite is **White Hole**, a superb section of reef at the northern end of Eleuthera. "White Hole gets its name from the extreme whiteness of the sand that surrounds the big coral heads," he said. "The depth is only 50 feet and the whole reef is bright and colorful because of the clear water and reflected sunlight. The coral heads rise 10 or 12 feet from the bottom, providing lots of habitat for fish...we also see larger animals like



▲ Barry Albury



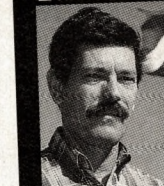
▲ Brendal Stevens



▲ Keith Rodgers



▲ Ricardo Davis



▲ Leroy Lowe



▲ Junko Yamaguchi

spotted eagle rays, hawksbill turtles and Caribbean reef sharks, too. Several really nice swim-throughs provide a bit of navigational challenge, but this is an easy, relaxing dive. There is almost never any current and the surface conditions are generally calm. I think it's the most enjoyable dive in The Bahamas."

In the five years that Mark Bailey has been with Blackbeard's Cruises, he has seen a lot of the beautiful underside of The Bahamas. As captain of Blackbeard's live-aboard catamaran, *Cat Ppalu*, he has the chance to see the truly superb dive spots. His favorite is **Dog Rocks Wall**, on the northern end of the Exuma island chain.

"The dive starts at 35 feet," he said, "descending through a maze of coral with many cuts. The wall starts at 85 feet near the spot where a pinnacle rises adjacent to the wall. As you swim south along the wall you come to a large swim-through lined with sponges and swarming with silversides. The light streaming in from above gives the effect of the sun coming through the stained glass windows of a church....The life here is incredible. You can see everything from big spotted eagle rays to tiny regal sea goddess nudibranchs."

The island of San Salvador, thought to be Columbus' first landfall in the New World, is our next stop. Chris McLaughlin, the dive operations and photo manager at Riding Rock Inn Resort and Marina chose **Telephone Pole** as his favorite.

"The visibility is so good that it's easy to see everything. There is an humongous purple gorgonian nearby that has been photographed so many times it has become a signature of the site....To the right, the wall gives way to a huge sand slope, to the left is a long stretch of lovely wall to explore. Everyone sees something different on this dive, from scalloped hammerheads and hawksbill turtles to nudibranchs and lobsters."

Far from the lights of any big city, near Conception Island, we hook up with Kristen Zirkle, the second captain and dive instructor aboard the live-aboard *Bottom Time II*. According to Kristen ("Kaz"), nothing beats **Anchor Wall** off Conception Island.

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"This is one of the deeper walls," she said, "starting around 75 feet and dropping off into infinity....The visibility is always great so you get the feeling

of flying through narrow mountain passes. The wall is packed with corals and sponges. I try to keep an eye out to the blue side, because that's where the sharks and eagle rays go swimming past. The name of the dive comes from

the anchor that is encrusted into the coral near the top of the wall."

Stella Maris Resort on Long Island, founded 30 years ago by Joerg Frieze and his partners, is a place for divers who appreciate the natural beauty of the islands. Joerg's favorite is **Lighthouse Point Wall** at Conception Island.

"We usually see three to five sharks at a time here," said Joerg, "and two or three turtles. We always see southern stingrays, spotted eagle rays, and schools of barracuda and blue parrotfish. At least once a year during the last six years our divers have had the great pleasure of diving with whale sharks here.... Lighthouse Point Wall is a special place because of its unspoiled coral and sponges...."

Heading west and north, we continue to the Exumas, stopping at George Town on Great Exuma to dive with Johnny and Connie Dey, owners of the Exuma Dive Center. Johnny's favorite is a place simply called **The Wall**.

"This dive is only six miles from the shop," Johnny said, "and the visibility is forever. The top of the reef is about 80 feet down and the wall drops from there to about 6,000 feet in one big step. At about 100 feet, the face of the wall has caverns you can drive a truck through, and we always encounter interesting animals

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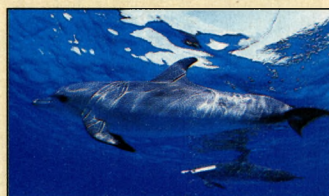
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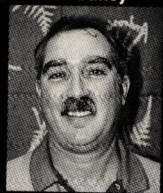
▲ Derek Tozer



▲ Richard Rowe



▲ Mark Bailey



▲ Chris McLaughlin



▲ Kristin Zirkle



▲ Joerg Frieze



▲ Johnny Dey

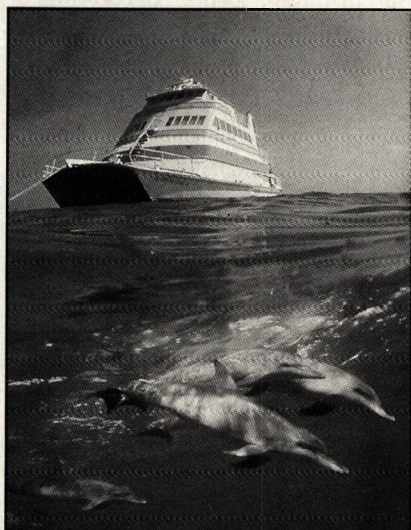
around them—sharks, mantas, morays, jewfish and, sometimes, bull sharks resting on the bottom...”

Small Hope Bay Lodge is on Andros Island, the largest Bahamian island. This is where we'd find Mike Hornby, a dive instructor. His favorite is **Church Windows**.

“This is an extended range dive,” he said, “where the wall starts at 110 feet. It's on the Tongue of the Ocean where the maximum depth is about 6,000 feet. This is a decompression dive, descending to a large coral head at 90 feet. From there a line is followed over the wall to a large horizontal opening at 225 feet. The cavern is lined with black corals and crinoids and is normally filled with silversides. A vertical shaft of light cuts through the cavern, imparting the feel of a great cathedral.”

South Bimini is the home of Scuba Bimini Dive Center and Hiram Rolle, our guide for this dive.

Hiram's favorite dive is a drift dive at the **Continental Shelf**. Only a half mile from South Bimini, this dive takes place along the edge of the Gulf Stream. “The lip of the continental shelf is 135 to 140



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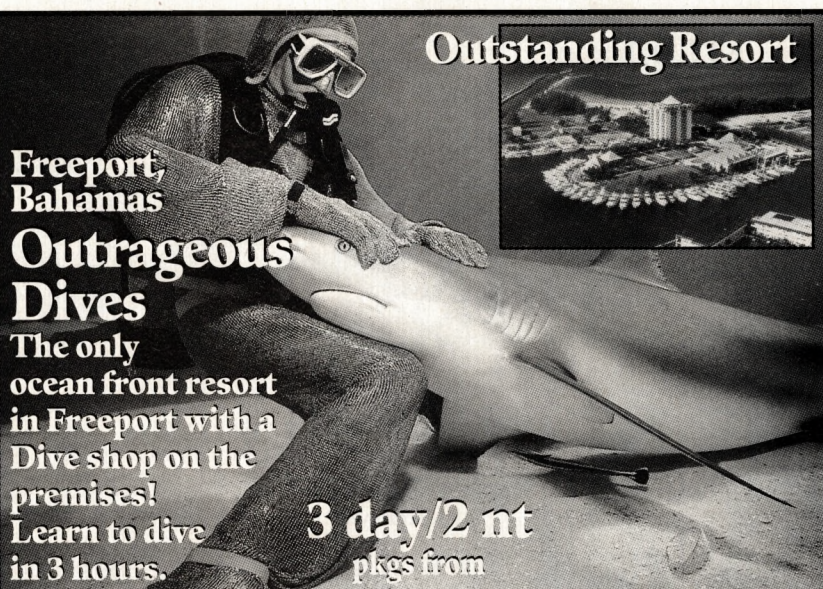
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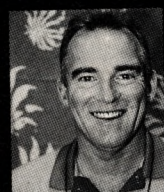
Bahamas

feet deep here," said Hiram, "and this unique dive lets us get a rare look at it. We do this one as a six minute dive at 130 feet with a five minute safety stop. We take a maximum of eight divers and we put a weighted line down to 130 feet with space for everyone to hang on. Once you're down riding the Stream, you see daylight on the land side and blue night on the water side. It's like being on the edge of the world. We see... marlin, hammerheads and jewfish."

Hopping across to North Bimini we come to Bimini Undersea and Melanie Philippi. She picks Tuna Alley off near-by Cat Cay.

"The wall at Tuna Alley has a great profile for divers. Depth ranges from 40 to 100 feet, and the wall runs generally south to north with [many] gullies and cuts running east-west. The corals thrive here, with large areas of pristine finger corals, big star coral heads, and delicate antler corals. Photographers love it. For macro or wide-angle, there are lots of subjects."

Working our way northward again, we arrive at Freeport and Port Lucaya on Grand Bahama Island, home of the Underwater Explorers Society, better known as UNEXSO. Jason Carey, the diving supervisor, picked Theo's Wreck, "...because it has everything all in one place. And it's not only excellent during the day, it's a phenomenal night dive. The ship is a 230 foot long freighter, sunk in 1982. It came to rest



▲ Mike Hornby



▲ Hiram Rolle



▲ Melanie Philippi



▲ Jason Carey



▲ Douglas Long



▲ Kevin Cooper

on the port side in 100 feet of water near the drop-off. There are two interesting penetrations: the main cargo hold and the engine room. The wreck is overgrown with encrusting corals and sponges, [which] attracts a great deal of fish life. Anything from sharks to eels could show up, you never know what you'll see."

Douglas Long, dive instructor and shark feeder for Xanadu Undersea Adventures, chose **Shark Alley**.

"You can't find a better opportunity anywhere in the world to see sharks close up in the wild. The dive takes place in an area where the sand bottom is only 45 feet deep and the visibility is excellent. I get to hand feed the sharks while our divers kneel on the sand about 10 feet away....I can often put [a shark] into a sleep-like state by stroking its head. It's only one of the many facets of shark behavior you can witness at Shark Alley."

Live-aboard dive boats such as *Nekton Pilot* can take you to the far corners of The Bahamas, including spots such as **Mount Olympus**. This is the favorite dive of Kevin Cooper, *Nekton Pilot's* activities director.

"Drop into the water at Mount Olympus," he told me, "and you'll see three extremely large mounds of coral that rise up from the bottom at 100 feet to within 60 feet of the surface. The mounds are always surrounded by clouds of reef fish and pelagics, including big amberjacks, black groupers, horse-eye jacks and spotted eagle rays. The tops of the mounds are covered with healthy hard corals, and it's sponge city on the sides..."

Lining up all of these dives on one grand trip would be phenomenal, but it's unlikely because of the distances involved. It is easy to forget that The Bahamas include nearly 700 islands scattered across a blue stretch of water about the size of Connecticut. They range in size from very large islands to rocks with standing room for one person. The nice thing about these dives, though, is that they represent a handful of plums from a whole plum tree. No matter which island group you choose for your dive trip, you'll probably be able to make one or two of these, plus many other great dives. 🐠

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photo/Carolyn Pascal-Guarino

Family Dive

BY CAROLYN PASCAL-GUARINO

Well, it happened. A few short years ago your only thoughts about your next vacation were the bar, a little local cuisine, maybe some music, a full moon and...well you get the idea. Ahhh, the simple pleasures of a bygone era.

But our lives are so much fuller now: full of play dates, play stations and play dough; school calendars, church calendars and sports calendars. When did it happen that getting time off work was the least of your problems in planning a vacation? Well, it happened. But don't forget, we're the generation that can have it all. That means if you've got the will to find your way back to an era that included diving among other pleasurable pursuits, I'm here to tell you that it can be done! And you need not leave the little ones behind (unless your sanity depends on it).

Here are a few practical tips if you're ready to take the plunge and have it all. I'm sure after your first family dive vacation you'll be able to add to my list, and I welcome your input for a follow-up article.

Tip #1: "Kid's Programs" Mean Different Things at Different Resorts

Unlike babysitting services, which are pretty self-ex-

planatory, kid's programs can be anything from a supervised swingset to a full week's program of mind and body enriching activities. Don't wait till you're at the resort to realize you've invested in the former. Check ahead for as many specifics as you can get from printed material, the Internet and word of mouth. If you find a lack of information on kid's programs, there's probably a good reason. A resort that doesn't cater to kids may suit you just fine—as long as you don't expect otherwise. Remember, your happiness will have a direct correlation to the happiness of those around you.

Tip #2: Getting There Does Not Have to be Part of the Adventure

It's possible that in the "good old days" the more remote and harder to get to spots were the most attractive to you. Let this be a gentle reminder that island-hopping with a couple of bags and a few seasoned travelers may not reflect



Vacations

Tips from a SUPER Mom

Snorkeling is an adventure the family can enjoy together.

photo: Bill Harrigan

the realities of your life today.

Did you ever feel like just getting your family out of the house was a major ordeal? Well, remember that feeling when considering your next dive destination. Whenever possible, I opt for nonstop flights and pre-arranged airport transfers. (The only thing worse than missing a connection is arriving in a foreign airport with more bags and family members than you can comfortably handle.)

Many "exotic" dive destinations charter their own flights from major gateways and arrange airport transportation, so you need not forgo a more remote setting.

Tip #3: Condos, Cottages and Suites Were Invented for a Reason

Yes, I know a hotel room next to the dive shop works just fine. Sure a fridge and some extra space would've been a nice luxury to store cold beer, some wine and extra gear,

but one you could easily live without. That former luxury may have just become a life saver. Unless you're at an all-inclusive resort, meals are a significant added expense. If you can economize on breakfast and lunch, you can relax when your dinner costs more than your hotel room per night. In addition to saving money, waking up to a cup of coffee on your balcony gets the day off to a pretty pleasant start.

Local grocery shopping can be fun, too. Stocking up on favorite cereals, juices, bottled water and snacks will become an indulgence you won't want to live without. When traveling with babies or children with special dietary needs, check ahead on the availability of those items. If your brand of diapers and formula are easily accessed on location, consider packing only a minimal supply and replenishing as needed. Likewise, bring your own if you anticipate difficulty in obtaining critical supplies (resort drug counters are painfully limited).

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photo/Bill Hemmgen

Above, right and below:
While on the boat,
beach or preparing for
your forays into the
deep, dive vacations
give families the chance
to just hang out and
enjoy each other.



photo/Rick Lesser

I guess I always knew theoretically that condos/suites were an excellent option for traveling families. Now I can report first-hand that given the choice between cramming a roll-away into an average-sized hotel room, forgoing any kind of privacy, and having to pay room service prices for every unexpected thirst, my vote would have to go for the extra space. Connecting rooms are another good option when a hotel makes more sense than a condo. So consider the alternatives and the wise words of my friend Eileen who repeatedly declares, "It's my vacation, too!"

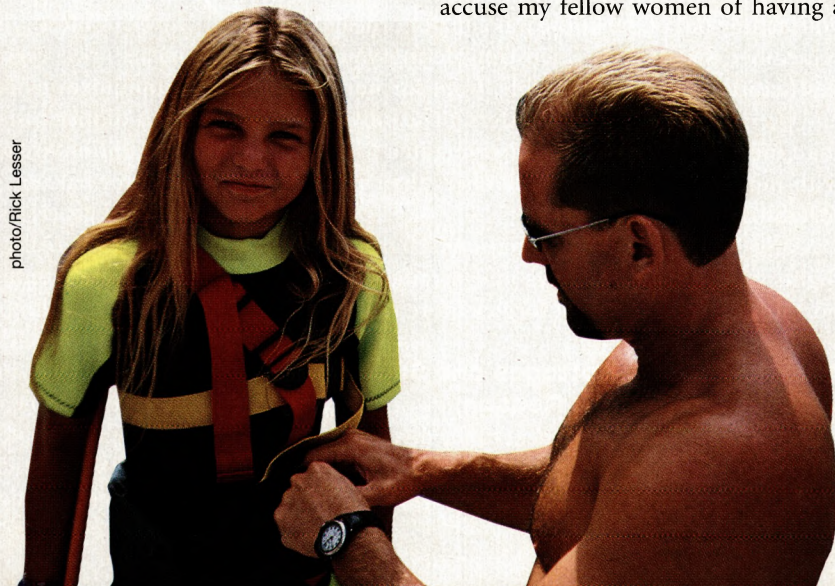
Tip #4: Travel Size Items Serve a Purpose

I used to shrug my shoulders when friends would observe with humor the large size of the toiletry items I traveled with. When packing for one, it hardly mattered if I brought enough shampoo to last a month. But as the

number of required toiletries has increased, the quantity of those items has decreased in direct proportion. Which leads me to Tip #5.

Tip #5: Pack Light! Words of Wisdom to Mom

My husband is laughing as, after my many years of traveling, I have yet to learn how to pack efficiently. I may never learn, but I do understand it's the right thing to advise. Although I don't like to stereotype, particularly by gender, men do seem to instinctively know they can wear a sports jacket, slacks and maybe even a shirt more than once. I don't want to accuse my fellow women of having a



photo/Rick Lesser

on to the wonders of the world below.

Scuba Fun for the Young

Kids love blowing bubbles. Whether they're blowing bubbles with their milk, with their gum, or in the bathtub, they just can't get enough. So why not introduce them to the fun and excitement of the mother of all bubble blowing experiences—a scuba Bubblemaker Experience program.

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The new Bubblemaker Experience at a PADI Dive Center or Resort is designed with youngsters (ages 8 to 12) in mind. Watch your kids' fascination with the water turn to pure delight as they take that first breath of air underwater, turning your little swimmers into real fish.

Discovering scuba diving in a pool firsthand will introduce your lucky youngster to the thrill of a lifetime—consider making scuba a part of the entire family's agenda on your next holiday. Scuba for the under 12 set is definitely an option.

For further information, contact your local PADI Dive Center or Resort at www.PADI.com.

harder time with this basic concept, but if the shoe fits...(pack it).

How do you go about packing light? Well I have learned that black, white and beige can be very versatile wardrobe options. If you're traveling to a casual dive resort, think open-air, flat shoes, wrinkle-free, day to night kind of clothes (I always carry a cotton sweater to guard against over air-conditioning).

Leave all but the most essential pieces of good jewelry behind. It's one less thing to have to worry about (I guess that's a strong argument for costume jewelry).

Children could use a few activities to occupy their plane, restaurant and general down time, but you need not transport their playroom to your hotel room. My experience has shown time and again that the more I bring, the less is actually used. And once again, you'll worry less if the traveling toys are easily replaceable rather than the opposite.

Tip #6: Dive Guilt Free

The best way to achieve guilt-free diving is to make sure everyone knows what to expect. If someone is going to be left on beach/pool duty while you're off exploring at sea, make sure they approve of the plan. It should not come as a surprise to you or your family that the dive boat leaves at 9:00 am and doesn't return till noon. Make

sure you choose a location and resort that can satisfy not only your diving desires, but your family's other interests as well. Whether it be tennis, golf, shopping, sight-seeing or just plain sun and sea, make sure it's accessible (i.e.: if you find yourself saying, "We'll figure it out when we get there," stop and think again). "Ocean view" may not mean you're on the beach, and "Access to town" may mean a 25 minute and \$25 taxi ride.

After diving, plan an activity that everyone will enjoy. Maybe this is the time for the family to try snorkeling. We started our daughter off in the pool and she was comfortable with a mask and snorkel well before she could swim. The next step was floating in the sea hand in hand, complete with pointing and squealing at each passing yellowtail. The picture books come to life and the most memorable experiences are made.

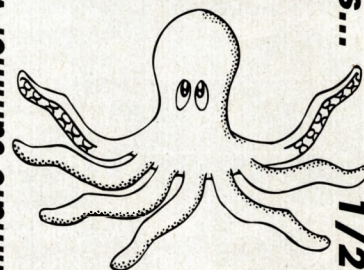
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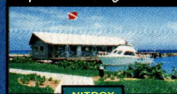
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FAMILY VACATION

ogy and certification training.

Many resorts and dive centers offer U/W video and slide shows, marine ID programs and U/W photography seminars. Dolphin and other marine encounters are another great way to include your family in your special interest. These experiences will be fun and educational at every level.

Tip #7: Weather Matters

Some destinations get virtually no rainfall and have very consistent temperatures year-round. This is not the case in most places however. Beware of rainy/hurricane seasons, water conditions in winter vs. summer, and seasonal price variations. If you're working around school holidays, remember that you're not alone. Spring break, Thanksgiving, and particularly Christmas books up to a year in advance, so advance planning is advised.

It also gives you a better opportunity to gather information and pre-

book unique dives that may be in great demand.

Also, check on the dive center's cancellation policy. You'll find everything from no refunds under any circumstances to full refund no questions asked. (Usually it's somewhere in between.)

Tip #8: Stay Healthy

Sunburn, bug bites and stomach aches can undermine the best laid plans. Make sure your supply of sunscreen, insect repellents and antacid tablets are used before it's too late. I've found carrying a few band-aids and basic first aid supplies akin to carrying an umbrella—if you do, chances are you won't need it, but if you don't, you will be sorry.

Tip #9: Know Thyself

Do you feel more comfortable traveling in groups where most of the arrangements are made for you? Then a trip arranged through a dive shop, dive club or packaged tour may offer you the benefit of someone

else's experience.

If you don't want a lot of surprises, especially when it comes to cost, look into all-inclusive resorts where you won't have to sweat out the expense of every mealtime and sports activity. All-inclusives are also a great way for families to enjoy different activities at the same resort at the same time, many with organized kid's programs for various age groups.

The free-spirited adventurer that is looking for maximum independence should consider a condo, car rental and local currency. It is very possible that you could be happy with any of the above scenarios, in that case defer to the best interests of the family as a whole.

Tip #10: Have Fun!

This is it: your family, your quality time, your priority, your personal life. You can do it. You can travel, dive and make memories to last a lifetime. Then you can become your own neighborhood expert on how to have it all! 🐠



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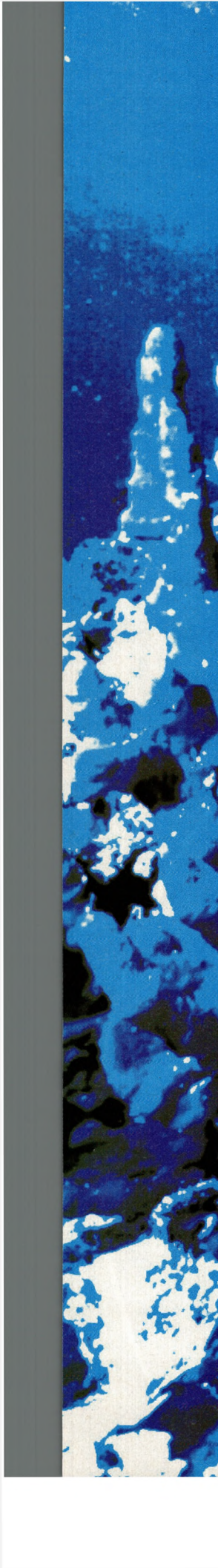
Riding a Blue



A diver swoops under a
colorful overhang. Inset
left: A burning bush of
sponges ignites the reef.

Train

Text and Photography by Walt Stearns



Throughout my travels, I have had the good fortune to experience a multitude of dive destinations all over the world, which have often turned out to be both exciting and visually stunning.

When I visited Cozumel in 1992, I thought it presented some of the most dramatic coral formations I had ever seen in the western Caribbean. I explored **Columbia** and **Palancar Reefs** in awe, admiring huge coral buttresses 30 to 60 feet high, with labyrinths of deep, winding ravines and crevices leading out to the drop-off on their seaward side. And the diving is conducted as drifts; frankly, I love drift diving. It's like hitching a ride on a big blue train with a 360° view.

Equally tantalizing was Cozumel's robust cast of predators, from large green morays and snappers to groupers prowling the reefs. Just about every site had an impressive number of large groupers; the most notable of the heavyweights were black groupers, measuring three to four feet in length.

This was a place I vowed to visit again, promptly. But, over time, other destinations took away my attention and when Cozumel came up I told myself, "What could I possibly be missing?"

Well! Last January, seven years to the month from my one and only trip to Cozumel, I was back again. I found myself over one of the island's popular dive sites, **Santa Rosa Wall**. This spot follows the same linear pattern as Columbia and Palancar, with one side sweeping off into the void far below from a depth of 50 feet.

Santa Rosa's flourishing community stood out like a city skyline, living architectural wonders that vaulted upward 30 to 40 feet. Etched and shaped through centuries of the Yucatan current's flow, broad undercuts, ledges, and caves have formed, creating a tangled network of swim-throughs large enough to conceal an army of divers.

Due to the constant movement of water, which can range from a barely perceptible half knot to speeds approaching three knots, the use of mooring buoys or anchors is impractical. The best way to explore Cozumel's reefs is by drift diving.

During the dive, the boat follows overhead, (moving close to the same speed of the current), using divers' bubbles as a tracking aid. Cozumel's extreme underwater clarity, which can approach 200 feet (averaging between 100 and 150 feet), sometimes makes it possible for the captain to actually see the divers as they move along the bottom.

The current's gentle push optimizes our time for exploring this prominent reef tract, which spans a quarter mile, and reveals a treasure trove of subjects. In addition to the reef's rich adornment of sponges in hues of deep yellow and

Where to Stay, Play & Dive

Across the street from Fiesta Americana is the dive operation Dive House. Owners Juan Leca and Evelyn La Plante supply exceptional equipment—a full line of Scubapro gear and tank rentals for shore dives—and professional service. This includes training and certification (including referrals) under PADI, NAUI, and TDI (for nitrox).

Dive House offers four dives per day—a two tank morning dive, followed by a two tank afternoon dive, as well as night dives three times a week, with the option to book more. Dive House has a fleet of five large dive boats (30 to 46 feet in length) that rank among the fastest and most comfortable in the region. In addition, nitrox certified divers can request (24 hours in advance) both nitrox 32 and 36 for their dives.

Fiesta Americana employs a management staff of certified scuba divers. The property features 172 ocean view rooms and 56 tropical casitas suites. In addition, there are three restaurants, a swimming pool with swim up bar, tennis court, car rental facility, and sundry store. Kayaks, windsurfers, bicycles, and snorkeling equipment (obtainable at the dive shop) are also available.

For more information, call Dive House/ Fiesta Americana Cozumel Dive Resort at (800) FIESTA-1 (343-7821), in Mexico call 01-987-226-22. Send e-mail to dive@fiestaamericana.com.mx or fiesta@gate.net. Or call Island Dreams Tours & Travel in the U.S. at (800) 346-6116, fax (713) 973-8585, e-mail info@islandream.com.

orange, was a hearty supply of marine denizens of the more mobile variety. Every time I thought I had seen my last lobster of the dive, my dive partner and guide, Juan Gomez, would be once again pointing out another aggregation of spiny lobsters watching the world pass by from the safety of their lairs in the reef.

Looking at everything around me, including (as if nothing had changed over the years) the same healthy stock of large black, yellowfin, and yellowmouth groupers I had observed here that one time before, I couldn't help but feel incredibly stupid for allowing so many years to pass. Well, there's no time like the present to catch up on what I have been missing. 🐠

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BY KAY P. VINCENT

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The exhibit hall will showcase 150 exhibitors from many countries, featuring the latest in equipment, technology, and adventure travel opportunities. Visitors can attend activities such as a technical diving workshop by Chuck Noe, or an underwater video workshop hosted by David O. Brown from the Cousteau dive team. The popular free environmental awareness area has expanded to feature some new interactive elements to entertain and educate the youngest attendees.

Seaspace kicks-off on Friday evening to the Caribbean beat of CMX5, a band from Grand Cayman, sponsored by the Cayman Islands Department of Tourism.

Established in 1969 by the Houston Underwater Club, Seaspace is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) corporation dedicated to education and preserving the marine environment. Seaspace provides thousands of dollars in scholarships to individuals and organizations committed to the study of the marine sciences.

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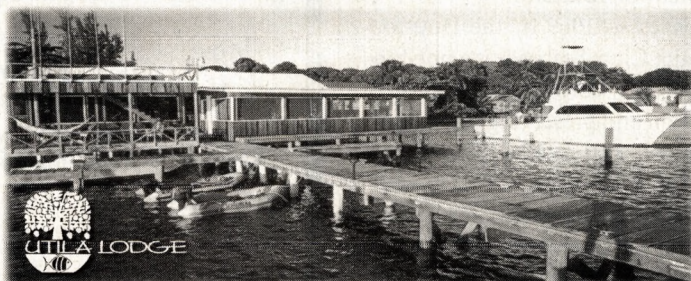
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DAN Announces O₂ Regulator Recall

Allied Healthcare Products, Inc. has recalled all oxygen regulators sold under the Life Support Products (LSP) brand. This recall is to replace aluminum components in the unit's high-pressure chamber with brass components. This action is in response to reports of fires and explosions, the exact cause of which remains unknown.

DAN has sold regulators that are affected by this recall. The two regulators in question are the LSP 270-020 and the LSP 280-020. These products were sold in the DAN Standard, Dual, Mini, Charter, and Training Unit oxygen systems from 1985 to 1987. This recall does not affect the DAN Rescue Pak, Rescue Pak Plus, and the regulators that are sold with those systems.

For more information, contact the recall coordinator at (800) 231-5273, e-mail RRC@alliedhpi.com or fax (314) 771-1806.

Dive Provo and the New Allegro T & C Resort

Dive Provo is providing watersports programs for the Allegro Resort—Turks and Caicos in Providenciales. The new all-inclusive resort is on Grace Bay.

Dive Provo, the only PADI Five-Star facility on the island, will provide all watersports services including diving, snorkeling, sailing, and kayaking.

Dive Provo, in conjunction with Allegro Resorts, is offering special grand opening packages. For more details, call (800) 234-7768 or visit the website at www.diveprovo.com.

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Seized Ships Make New Dive Sites in Mariana Islands Possible

Dive travelers visiting the island of Rota in the Mariana Islands will soon be able to dive two of the world's newest underwater wrecks. The vessels, known as *Chinese River Boat* and *Blue Stern Traveler*, were sunk earlier this year and have been approved as new dive sites by local governmental agencies.



The *Chinese River Boat*

The vessels, placed in Rota's Sasan-haya Harbor, were provided courtesy of the U.S. District Attorney and the U.S. Marshall's Office. According to Rota Mayor Benjamin T. Manglona, "This is an unprecedented opportunity.



The *Blue Stern Trawler*

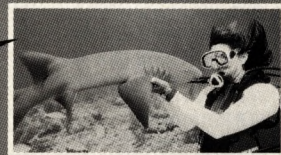
We can increase tourism and at the same time help restore our precious marine environment."

Manglona added, "We've had great cooperation from everyone."

To see photos of the vessels prior to the sinking, and for more information about diving in the region, visit the island's website at www.rotaisland.com.

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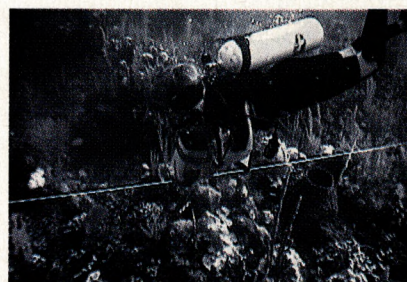
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Color-Correcting Technology Helps Scientist Study Coral Bleaching

Melanie Dotherow-McField, a PhD. candidate at the University of South Florida's Department of Marine Science, has logged many dives as part of her study of coral reefs in Belize. One of her most recent dives uncovered some-



photo/courtesy Melanie McField

Studying the effects of coral bleaching in Belize.

thing distinctly different about some of the bleached colonies she was investigating. A bright pink fluorescent pigment appeared on several of the corals that McField had not seen before.

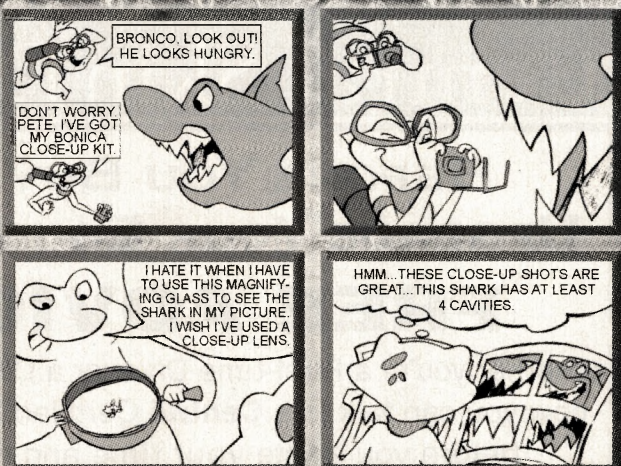
"It was the first thing I noticed when we entered the water," said McField, who had decided to try a SeaVision mask for the dive. "I changed masks underwater during one of the dives for a comparison, and the bright pink fluorescent color was only visible with the mask that had a red filter."

Red is the first color in the spectrum to be lost during a dive, often disappearing in just 30 feet of water. "We've known about the value of red filters in filming and still photography for a long time, but this was one of the first times I had used a color-correcting mask, and it obviously



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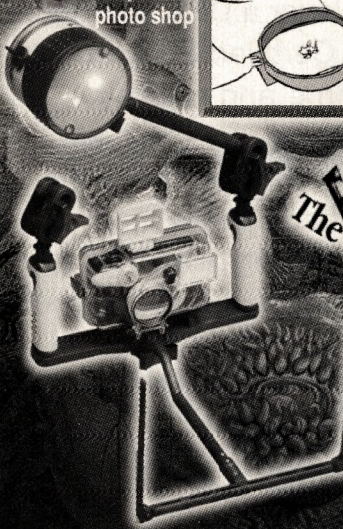


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Bronco The Diver

made a difference," she recalls.

McField's work, a four-year study of the various changes in the coral reefs in Belize, has included a specific investigation into coral bleaching. Although bleaching is generally detrimental to reefs, it may offer new opportunities to understand more about the symbiotic relationship between corals and the algae that live within them. During bleaching events, there are fewer algal pigments, making it easier to see the coral's various pigments. The red filter allows divers to see pigments rarely visible under normal conditions.

The next step? In order to study this further, scientists will need to wait for another bleaching episode to occur. Unfortunately, past experience and global climate predictions indicate that it will happen again. "We just have to hope that it's later rather than sooner," McField concluded. 🐟

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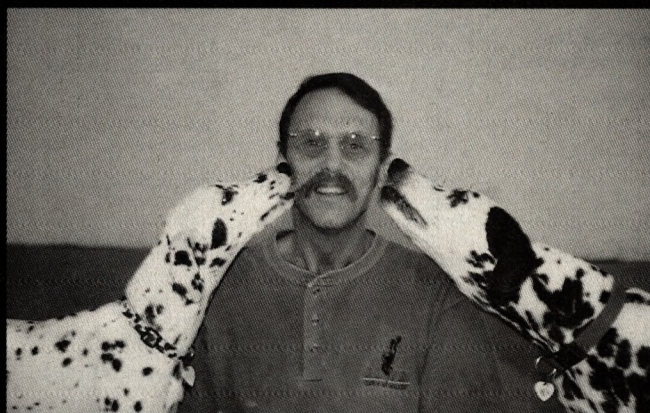
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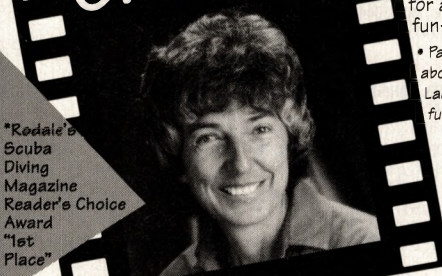
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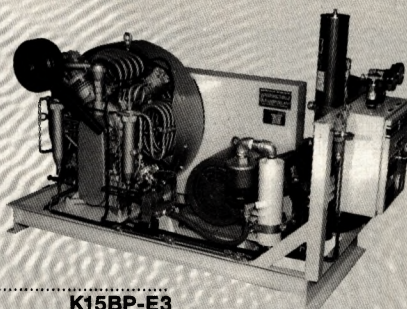
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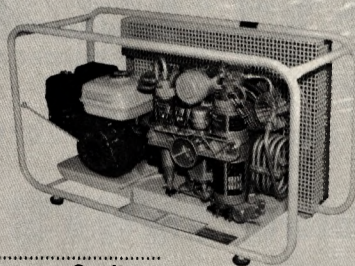
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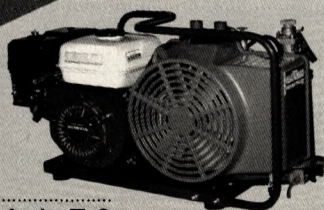


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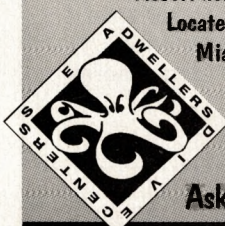


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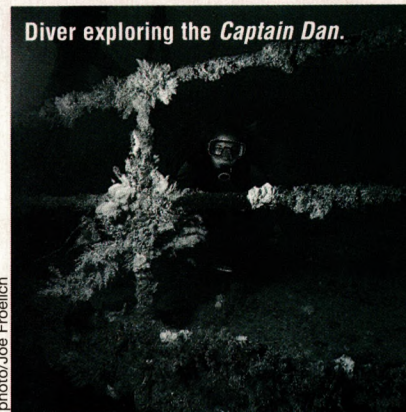
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photo/Joe Froelich

Marine Archaeology in the Florida Keys

The 10th annual Florida Keys Marine Archaeology Field School will be July 10 to 17 in the Florida Keys. Divers are invited to once again take part in this exciting program. The Dive Into History program is hosted every year by the National Center for Shipwreck Research (NCSR). All work is conducted and supervised by Dr. R. Duncan Mathewson III, a well-known authority on historic shipwreck archaeology. In his 25 years of work, he has taught the subject to nearly 1,500 sport divers in 20 states.

This summer's field school will involve surveys on historical shipwrecks in the Upper Keys. All information collected in the field school will be added to the shipwreck database, which was started by NCSR eight years ago. Recreational divers will be playing a major role in developing an inventory and site-specific criteria in support of the NOAA Management Plan for the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. Dive boats and equipment for the program are being provided by Spencer Slate of Captain Slate's Atlantis Dive Center.

To participate in the 1999 program, contact Duncan Mathewson at (305) 453-3833 or visit the NCSR webpage at www.members.aol.com/ncsr1988.



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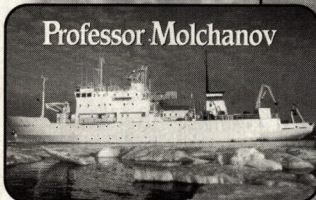
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Dive Professionals Can Help Save the Coral Reefs

Unless you're new to diving or have spent the last decade on the moon, you probably know coral reefs are in serious trouble. While divers are near the bottom of the list when it comes to reasons why coral reefs are dying, they're often an easy target to blame. As a result, resource managers and dive industry experts alike have long voiced the desire to improve the environmental awareness of divers and snorkelers who visit coral reefs. The problem is there has never been a comprehensive training program designed specifically to meet this objective—until now.

A unique program, Marine Resource Management for Dive Professionals, is now under development. A series of pilot courses designed to refine and validate the curriculum will be held later this year. This 30-hour professional development course is designed to give instructors and divemasters—or anyone who's involved in supervising or teaching divers—a background in coral reef ecology, along with an introduction to pertinent marine resource management issues that affect divers and the diving industry.

"No dive professional can even imagine a world without coral reefs," says course designer Alex Brylske. "But that could become a reality in our childrens' lifetimes. Giving professionals the tools they need to create skilled and environmentally aware divers is what this course is all about."

More information about this program is available at www.coralislandcharters.com/MHMcourse.html. Remember, if you're not part of the solution, then you're part of the problem. 🐠

Oahu's Bayfest 1999

Ocean Concepts will host Bayfest, Oahu's largest water-sports event, July 16 through 18. There will be discover snorkeling programs and discover diving programs hourly at the onsite pool. There will be an underwater treasure hunt, with more than \$5,000 in prizes, and a snorkeling treasure hunt for youngsters ages 8 to 11. There will be seminars on travel and equipment maintenance, with equipment inspection offered onsite.

For more information, call Ocean Concepts at (800) 808-3483 or (808) 677-7975 or fax (808) 682-1031. You can e-mail info@oceanconcepts.com or visit the website at www.oceanconcepts.com.

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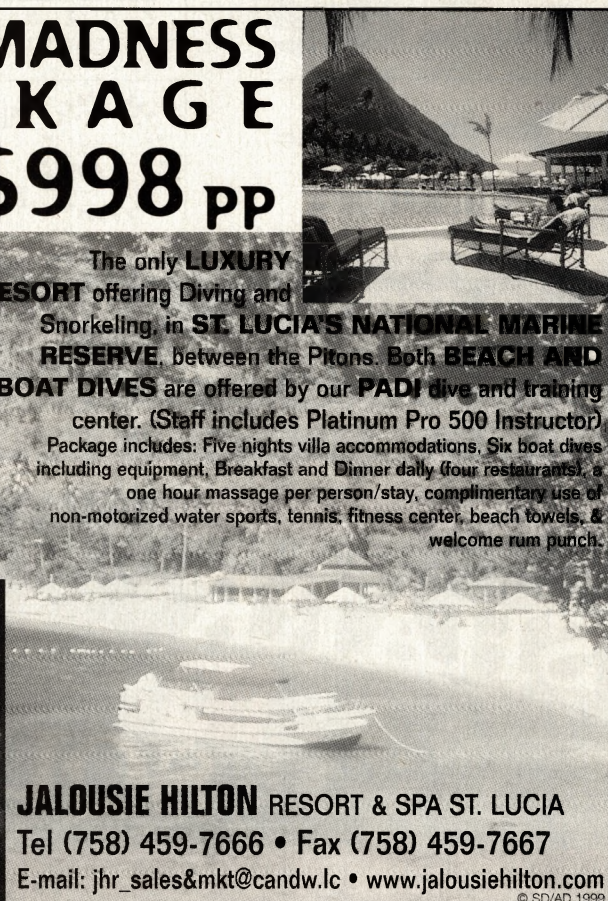
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Divers Learning Fly Fishing During Surface Intervals

Fly fishing surface intervals are a growing passion appealing to many divers who want a completely relaxing vacation.

Peter Hillenbrand, owner of the Southern Cross Club, a diving and fishing resort on Little Cayman in the Cayman Islands, says, "Our small resort caters primarily to the young and maturing professionals in their mid 30s to 50s who change gears from scuba diving to fly fishing. More and more we are seeing our diving guests taking up fly fishing between dives, and half of them are women."

Like scuba diving, fly fishing is considered one of the fastest growing soft adventure travel activities in North America, attracting a growing travel segment filled with upwardly mobile and established professionals. Aficionados describe fly fishing as a challenging sport that takes place in some of the most beautiful outdoor spaces on earth, such as the remote island of Little Cayman.

Little Cayman's Bloody Bay Wall offers some of the best diving in the world. Lesser known is the challenge of the bonefish, permit and other sport fish found in abundance on the shallow flats inside its fringing reef. The Southern Cross Club has established itself as *the place* to enjoy saltwater fly fishing, with a conservation-minded catch and release program.

Southern Cross' Adventure Package offers divers the opportunity to learn or improve their technique in the art of fly fishing. The seven night dive and fish activity package includes five two tank dive

trips and three half-day fishing sessions with a professional guide, with fly fishing lessons also available. The package is available between January 1 and June 31, 1999. For more information contact the Southern Cross Club at (800) 899-2582 or (619) 563-0017, or e-mail TVLBUCK@aol.com.

Aggressor Fleet Offers Free "Kids' Weeks"

The Aggressor Fleet has announced it will again offer special "Kids' Week" charters this summer. The free program allows kids between the ages of 4 and 11 to experience the thrill of live-aboard diving, while sharing the ultimate adventure with their parents on a week-long Aggressor adventure.

Last year's initial venture into family charters was such a success that the Aggressor Fleet has expanded its 1999 schedule to include charters aboard the *Kona Aggressor II* (July 3 to 10), the *Bay Islands Aggressor III* (July 10 to 17, July 31 to August 7, and August 7 to 14), and the *Cayman Aggressor IV* (July 10 to 17).

Young future divers aboard these vessels will be able to explore the warm, inviting waters that bustle with marine life. They will also have the opportunity to become certified "Snorkel Divers" through either NAUI or PADI. Kids 12 and older will be offered a free resort scuba course. Non-diving children will be provided with five hours of daily guided activities that include fish identification, water safety, the basics of still photography, and video production.

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SCUBA EQUIPMENT								
44	BERRY SCUBA	.120		JEEP/EAGLE	.17	102	JALOUSIE HILTON	.111
36	CENTRAL SKIN DIVER	.11	59	MAX AIR	.51	116	LEISURE TRAVEL, TROPICAL ADVENTURE	.49
37	CENTRAL SKIN DIVER	.101	92	PADI	.4		LOS CABO DIVE FEST	.67
38	CENTRAL SKIN DIVER	.115		SCUBA RADIO	.71		MARINE SPORTS	.108
	DACOR	.C2		SCUBA SHOW 1999	.110		MIKE BALL	.102
	DACOR	.120		SEASPACE	.48	14	MONROE COUNTY	.15
73	DIVERS SUPPLY	.113		UNDERCURRENT	.120		NASSAU UNDERSEA	.83
	DIVERS UNLIMITED	.115	DIVE TRAVEL			91	NEKTON DIVING CRUISES	.84
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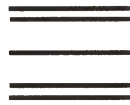
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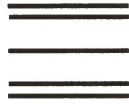
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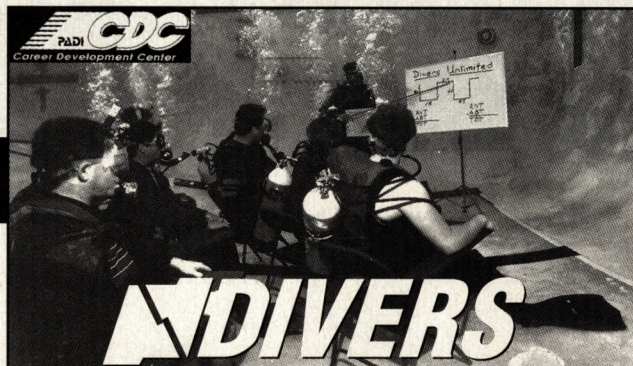
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The island tour consists of a drive through historic Blossom Village, private tour of the Little Cayman Museum, stop at the National Trust House and Booby Pond Nature Reserve, and Tarpon Lake Walk. You'll hear pirate tales and island folklore, learn about the life of the Caymanian people, see beautiful flora and fauna and maybe an iguana or two.

Then you have an opportunity to snorkel over Bloody Bay Wall or off a gorgeous sandy beach. While snorkeling, don't be surprised if you see a southern stingray, hawksbill turtle or even a shark! Next you'll be ready for a bountiful buffet lunch at Little Cayman Beach Resort. The rest of the afternoon is yours to sip a cool drink at the beach bar, swim in the pool, play tennis, work out in the fitness room, shop at Mermaid's Boutique, ride a bicycle, rent a sailboat or sea kayak, or simply relax in a hammock. There's so much to do you'll really need more than a day, so you'll have to come back.

Also available for the guests of Little Cayman Beach Resort are the Island and Snorkel Tours. Whether you're on the island to just relax or you want to take a day off from diving, tours can be arranged at the resort. Special trips can also be planned to one of the most beautiful beaches in the Cayman Islands, Point of Sands Beach. Contact Little Cayman Beach Resort at (345) 948-1033.

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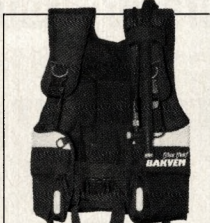
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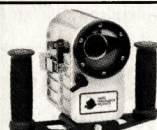


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Air Tahiti Nui Names Leopold Vice President, North America

Lou Leopold, a veteran with more than 30 years of experience in the South Pacific travel industry, was recently appointed Vice President, North America for Air Tahiti Nui, the new international



Lou Leopold, Vice President North America for Air Tahiti Nui.

airline of Tahiti. In his new position, Leopold will work on building the North American passenger base and establishing Air Tahiti Nui as the premier carrier to Tahiti.

"I am looking forward to working closely with the tour operators, cruise lines, travel agents, and incentive/meeting planners who are key to our business," Leopold said. "With Air Tahiti Nui being dedicated to the U.S. Market, and offering three weekly, nonstop flights from Los Angeles and excellent interline connections, we are ideally suited to meet the needs of our travel industry partners and clients."

Leopold previously has worked for a major tour operator, Tahiti Vacations, and has spent 15 years with Air New Zealand, the last 10 as the airline's North American sales manager.

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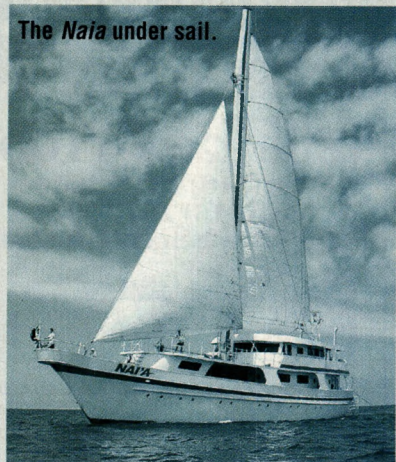
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The Naia under sail.



photo/Jack and Sue Drafaht

The Search For Amelia Earhart Continues

The Naia dive vessel, provider of exciting dive adventures in and around the Fijian Islands, is setting sail to help solve the mysterious fate of Amelia Earhart this summer. Archaeologists and researchers will travel aboard Naia from Fiji to a remote island in equatorial Kiribali. During this mission, they will examine compelling new evidence to support theories that Earhart, who disappeared in 1937, actually landed in Kiribali and survived before perishing after failed rescue attempts.

This is the second such venture in which Naia has been involved. During the last journey, team members dove into a murky lagoon to discover clues to add to the ever-growing jigsaw puzzle about Earhart's disappearance during a global flight attempt more than 50 years ago.

In addition to the on-island research, divers aboard the vessel will also have the opportunity to explore spectacular reefs seldom visited by anyone but the adventurous crew of the Naia and their guests.

For more details, visit the Naia website at www.naia.com.fj or call (800) 903-0272.

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Dive Industry Icon Graces the Pages of Sports Illustrated— Again!

In May of 1955, dive industry legend **Zale Parry** generated a lot of interest for diving when she appeared on the cover of *Sports Illustrated* magazine. Now, more than 40 years later, Zale again is featured in *Sports Illustrated*. This time, the NOGI award winner is featured in the magazine's "Catching Up With" section, a regular feature spotlighting cover personalities.



Zale Parry.

photo/Robert M. Barsky

It's appropriate that Zale would appear in the magazine's annual Swimsuit Issue, one of the most widely read issues of the year. After all, she was one of the first swimsuit models to appear on the magazine's cover. "It's incredible that they would want to do something about me after so many years," says Zale, who was inducted into the Diving Hall of Fame in 1993. "I can't believe so many more people today read the magazine compared to who saw the article back then."

Currently working on a retrospective of the history of diving, Dive America, Zale still dives when she can find the time. Last year, she joined Jean-Michel Cousteau on a week-long expedition and is looking forward to another trip as soon as the book is published.

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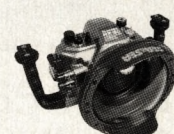
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Dominica Dive Fest

The Dominican Watersports Association is staging the sixth annual Dive Fest from July 2 to 10, 1999. The popular event includes free Discover Scuba events, whale watching, underwater treasure hunts, sunset cruises, kayaking races, and other exciting activities. At night, guests can enjoy concerts with steel drum bands, jazz groups and others.

The goal of this year's Dive Fest is to promote awareness of the marine environment and educate people of the need to conserve our marine resources. Previous Dive Fests have led to the installation of 33 moorings on dive sites all along the Dominican coastline. The local diving community is currently working to establish an on-island hyperbaric chamber.

For more information on the Dominica Dive Fest, visit the website at www.dominicadm.com.

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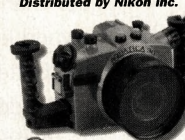
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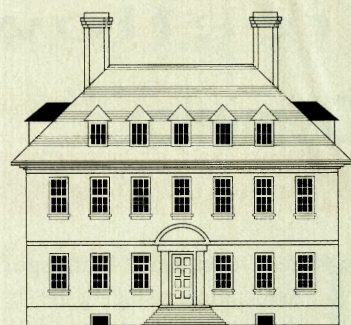
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time capsules

By Tamara Collins

Each month *Skin Diver* looks back through its pages searching for those little nuggets of yesteryear—old equipment, trends of the time, new discoveries—that echo the times and may surprise or shock us. It's good to know your roots and how discoveries of old have helped shape diving today.

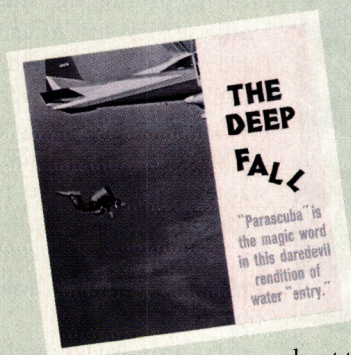
1976



The Great White Flight

Skin Diver legend has it that this July 1976 cover featuring a Great White Shark nearly caused a recession in the dive industry. It's more likely, though, that the Academy Award winning movie *Jaws* was the culprit. When *Jaws* came out in 1975, it scared the hell out of people, driving them from their pleasant aquatic pastimes to relative safety under their umbrellas on the beach. Regardless of the cause of the mass exodus, *Skin Diver* didn't run another shark cover until January 1993, when thrill seeking adventurers made diving with sharks one of the sport's most sought after experiences.

1964



Para Scuba Diving

"The military does it—why can't we?" is the basic premise of Charles Smithline's July 1964 article. *The Deep Fall* is a "how to" piece promoting the benefits of para scuba for recreational divers. "...for search, marking and recovery para scuba is the fastest and most efficient way to operate," he writes. It's also a much quicker way to get to the dive site, he says, with crowded beaches, grid-locked highways and heavy

boat traffic slowing divers down. The article goes on to describe where to position your tank, what gear to wear and the perfect 10-point landing. Well, adrenaline junkies have successfully combined surfing and sky diving—why not scuba?



1955



The Seaducer

Skin diving women of the '50s didn't have to sacrifice glamour, sex appeal and fashion for an adventurous spirit. They had the Seaducer and Sorcerer swimsuits to keep them warm, buoyant and oh so desirable. This curvaceous character can be found in many *Skin Divers* of the time, aiming her spear gun into the air with a wink and nod to women who wished to be as sexy underwater as they were self-sufficient. The Seaducer and Sorcerer came in a tingling cherry tone and were sold by Bal-Buoyant of Newport Beach, CA for \$24.95.

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Kayak Dive from Hell

BY STEVEN W. SINGER • ILLUSTRATION BY KIM WILSON BRANDT

We headed down to the Palos Verdes Peninsula in hopes of using our kayaks to explore some reefs too difficult to access via a normal surface swim. But when we arrived, we noticed that the area was blown out. With shoulders slightly slumped, we decided to head up the coast and see if the conditions improved. We arrived nearly an hour later, around noon, at a spot in Malibu near Big Rock. The surf looked manageable, and we were still very motivated, so we began unloading.

After paddling out to the shallow dive site, my dive buddy, Dave, threw his anchor over the side, and I tossed him my bow line so our two kayaks could be attached. With an average swell rocking our kayaks, we managed to set up our gear. The visibility was less than five feet, but after all this time and effort, by God, we were going to enjoy it!

Unfortunately, upon descending to the bottom, the visibility dropped to nearly zero with the surge and shifting sand making it very hard to get oriented. After about five minutes of being pushed back and forth across large rocks covered in urchins, we agreed to abort the dive and call it a day.

We surfaced near our kayaks and noticed the wind was blowing harder with small whitecaps everywhere. We removed our gear while still in the water and jumped back on our kayaks. I began to feel the onslaught of seasickness and contemplated slipping back into the water, which usually calms an upset stomach, but the rough conditions were not agreeable to such an action. *The sooner I throw up the better I would feel*, I thought to myself as I laid across the kayak and induced vomiting. This made things better for only a short time because in my hurry to empty my stomach I didn't secure my gear. My partially inflated BC was on a one-way express trip to Santa Monica!

Dave straddled his kayak and inched his way forward to remove the line that connected us, so he could go after my BC. As he was leaning forward to disengage the brass clip,

a larger swell rolled through and nearly rotated his kayak on its side, dumping Dave into the ocean.

In his haste to help me, Dave forgot to secure the hatch over his aft compartment. His first and second stage tumbled out of his kayak and disappeared into the murky waters. Now we were having some fun!

We realized we would have to keep Dave's kayak anchored where it was as a reference point to begin a search for his gear, so I paddled after my drifting BC, still weakened by the seasickness. After I returned, Dave rigged his gear and descended down the anchor line. When his fins hit the surgy bottom, he found himself standing right on top of his first stage. What luck! He popped up within a minute, gear in hand, and we carefully stowed our stuff and made it back to the beach without further incident.

Afterwards, we felt we had learned several valuable lessons. Regarding kayaking, we learned it is not wise to connect two kayaks together with one rope. I should always depend on my own anchor. We also realized that you should always secure the gear and hatches. Not only could you lose scuba equipment, but with these kayaks, the entire internal volume could rapidly fill with water and sink in a matter of seconds. And, of course, you should always tie off your equipment securely before moving on to the next task. Watching my gear float away is not my idea of a good time.

The more important dive lessons, independent of kayaks, have stayed with me as well. First, if the conditions are not good, then don't dive. If it's not going to be fun, why do it? Second, never put yourself in the position where you cannot help your dive buddy. If something had happened to Dave while he was searching for his gear, I would have been powerless to help. And last but not least, if it is too dangerous to retrieve lost scuba equipment, simply let it go. All equipment, no matter how expensive, can be replaced. We figured we could retrieve our gear, and we were lucky. 🐟



...if it is too dangerous to retrieve lost scuba equipment... let it go.



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